



# IN THE HEART OF POLISH SALEM: AN ETHNOHISTORICAL STUDY OF ST. JOSEPH HALL AND ITS NEIGHBORHOOD



SALEM MARITIME NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
SPECIAL ETHNOGRAPHIC REPORT

**In the Heart of Polish Salem:  
An Ethnohistorical Study of  
St. Joseph Hall and Its Neighborhood**

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**Cover photo:** Members of the St. Joseph Society in front of St. Joseph Hall on its fiftieth anniversary, 1949 (Dorothy Filip)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report focuses on Polish Americans in Salem, Massachusetts, and their associations with St. Joseph Hall (now owned by Salem Maritime National Historic Site) and the Derby Street neighborhood in which the national park site is located. The report (1) documents how members of Salem's Polish American community have developed a sense of themselves as a collective group over time from the period of early immigration through the present, (2) explores the role of the St. Joseph Society and its hall within their identity as a distinct ethnic community over time, and (3) provides a basis for future research and for an ongoing collaboration between community members and the park to document, preserve, and celebrate the history of Poles in Salem.

Key findings are as follows:

- The work of self-definition among Salem's Polish Americans took place over three generations in the overlapping contexts of (1) Polish history and nationalism, (2) the mostly urban ethnic enclaves of Polish America, and (3) the city of Salem, with its growing immigrant populations, its increasingly industrialized economy, and its deep sense of its own historical roots. Beginning with a somewhat chaotic first-generation mix of linguistic, regional, religious, and ideological sub-groups from a wide range of socioeconomic classes, Poles in Salem and the U.S. gradually achieved a general consensus about the central place of the Polish Roman Catholic Church within Polish American identity and a view of their community which emphasized family ties, property ownership, and hard work.
- There remains tremendous affection among Salem's Poles for the "old neighborhood" along Derby Street. Many people have fond recollections of this neighborhood as a largely self-contained ethnic enclave that incorporated home life, elementary school, shopping, and socializing.
- The third-generation Polish Americans who retain first-hand memories of the Derby Street neighborhood as a center of Polish life in the city are now in their sixties and older, and there is a generational and often geographical divide between the primary participants in this project and younger Polish Americans with roots in Salem. However, a sense of connection and community endures. Older Polish Americans in Salem are concerned but pragmatic about how their



community is continuing to change in the early twenty-first century. They recognize that if their local Polish Catholic church is eventually closed, as many ethnic parishes have been, an important cultural center will have been lost. But they see models in other Polish communities for retaining a sense of collective identity even without the historical center provided by the church.

Five recommendations emerged from this study:

- The park should find ways to strengthen direct connections with interested third-generation Polish Americans in and around Salem, and to work with them to broaden the base of interest in St. Joseph Hall and Salem's Polish history.
- Making St. Joseph Hall as available as possible to interested community members for gatherings, meetings, and other activities will help to strengthen these connections.
- The park should ensure continuity and succession among park staff involved in this community partnership so that relationships and projects around St. Joseph Hall do not depend on a small number of individuals.
- Establishing connections with interested staff at the House of Seven Gables could be a way to recognize and perhaps revitalize the important role played by the Gables in Polish neighborhood and community history over time.
- Future ethnohistorical research could fruitfully be conducted in several areas, outlined in Chapter Seven.

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\*Uncredited images are contemporary photos by authors. Other photo sources are noted in captions; these are the names of people and institutions who provided the photos, not (in most cases) the names of the photographers.



## FOREWORD

When the National Park Service purchased Saint Joseph Hall in 1988, I thought Salem's proud Polish heritage was nearing its end. The building itself was in disrepair, St. Joseph Society membership was dwindling, and Salem's remaining Polish-American population aging. At a ceremony in the Hall where the keys to the building were ceremoniously handed over to the Park Service under the approving eye of former Congressman Nicholas Mavroulas, who had helped orchestrate the sale of the building, the hurt was evident in many eyes.

At the ceremony, then-Superintendent Cynthia Pollack promised everyone in attendance the Polish-American contributions to Salem's rich heritage would not be forgotten. She stated that the Hall would remain a bastion of Polish-related activities, the National Park Service would honor the contributions of the Derby Street neighbors who frequented the building, and the park would do all it could to maintain their heritage.

Fast forwarding 20 years, remarkable things have occurred. Most importantly, St. Joseph Hall has been restored to its former grandeur. The building now houses Salem Maritime NHS's maintenance and administrative operations along with a combined education and meeting facility on the second floor. An interpretive exhibit focusing on neighborhood activities has been installed in the first floor storefront windows. Artifacts related to St. Joseph Hall and the community-at-large continue to be added to the park's museum collection. Finally, this ethnographic study was commissioned by the Park Service to fully document the activities and contributions of the Polish community.

Is this the end of the NPS's efforts to document and maintain the viability of what remains of the neighborhood? Hardly. We intend this study to be a starting point, a document that future scholars can refer to as research continues on the neighborhood. Already, as a result of this study, a volunteer group has sprung up to do further research on the community and to more fully document Derby Street neighborhood history. As activities related to the neighborhood continue, the park wants St. Joseph Hall to remain a focal point of the community, and to that end, Superintendent Cynthia Pollack's promise remains in effect.

David Kayser

Chief of Cultural Resources

Salem Maritime National Historic Site and Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site





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The very enjoyable process of conducting ethnographic and historical research in Salem's Polish American community has been made more enjoyable by our encounters with many interested, helpful, and supportive people along the way. At Salem Maritime NHS, we are grateful for the support of Superintendent Patricia S. Trap, and we have benefited greatly from the enthusiasm and expertise of Chief of Cultural Resources Dave Kayser and park Historian Emily Murphy. Chief of Visitor Services Peter LaChapelle has also contributed his invaluable knowledge to the project.

Within Salem's Polish American community, Linda Moustakis has been a mainstay of the project from the beginning, and an essential point of connection to people and resources. Her humor and spirit have informed this project throughout. Many other people have assisted us throughout the research; most of these are listed among our interviewees at the end of the report, but we particularly would like to acknowledge Eddie and Phyllis Luzinski, whose very long-standing association with the Polish neighborhood and the House of Seven Gables provided important insights, and also Mary Nowak, whose incredible memory of more than nine decades of Salem's Polonia deepened our understanding of the community in many ways. Marilyn Costa, Stanley Wisniewski, and Father Stanley Parfienczyk at St. John's Polish Catholic Church welcomed us into their building and shared both valuable resources and space with us as we delved into the school, church and St. Joseph Society records housed there.

At the House of Seven Gables, Amy Waywell and Kristen Cunha have been instrumental in unearthing historical materials and making them accessible to us; they have both been crucial and supportive partners in this project. Amy Waywell's persistence led to the discovery of the important cache of oral history recordings made in 1978, and Kristen Cunha willingly pulled and scanned many documents and photographs and researched materials herself to help us find needed documentation.

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Finally, we want to express our appreciation for the many roles played by Chuck Smythe, Manager of the Northeast Region Ethnography Program of the National Park Service, as interlocutor, supervisor of the entire project, and even occasional interviewer. His good counsel and great interest in the project have been essential to its completion.

Cathy Stanton and Jane Becker

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# CHAPTER ONE

## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

### A General Overview of the Project

The name “Salem, Massachusetts” usually conjures up images of schooners, witches, or both. This small maritime city is much less commonly associated with the history of American industrialization and the surge of European immigration that accompanied industrial expansion. But during the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries, Salem was home to considerable textile and shoe production and to many different ethnic groups, including Irish, Italians, French Canadians, and a very substantial population of Poles and other Eastern Europeans who were then often collectively categorized as “Slavs.” The city’s harbor area, long a center of maritime trade, became a busy manufacturing center, and the neighborhood parallel to the waterfront, roughly between Hawthorne Boulevard and Webb Street and from Essex Street to the harborfront, became the commercial and cultural center of the Polish community.

The core mission of Salem Maritime National Historic Site (NHS), created in 1938, is to preserve and interpret New England’s maritime history. But as with many national historic sites, this one encompasses places and histories that extend beyond the park’s specific interpretive mandate. In this case, it is located in an area in the heart of what was once Salem’s Polish neighborhood. More importantly, the park now incorporates a building of particular significance to Poles in and around the city: the hall built by the Polish St. Joseph Society<sup>1</sup> in 1909. This building came into the keeping of the National Park Service (NPS) in 1988, and it forms the foundation for this study and for the relationship that has developed and is continuing to develop between Salem Maritime NHS and people of Polish descent in Salem. In order to learn more about the history of St. Joseph Hall and the Polish community over time, the park commissioned this

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<sup>1</sup> The full official name of this society is not entirely clear from the available records. The handwritten record book on which much of our information is based begins with the title “Polish Society of St. Joseph in Salem,” and refers to the society founded in 1897 as “Society of Saint Joseph” and later as “Saint Joseph Society of Brotherly Help.” As will be discussed in Chapter Three, the Salem group decided around 1912 to affiliate itself with the national Polish Roman Catholic Union of America; artifacts from the Society, including insurance record books and regalia in the collection of Salem Maritime NHS, identify the group as St. Joseph Society, No. 604, ZPRK (the Polish initials of the PRCUA). Most of the records of the group were unavailable to us and may have been lost, making it difficult to trace the official name over time. Colloquially, people in Salem spoke of the group simply as the St. Joseph Society, a usage we will follow in this report.

study through the National Park Service's Ethnography Program, which was created in order to help parks understand and strengthen their relationships with groups for whom specific park resources—places, structures, artifacts—are a part of their shared cultural identity. This study of Salem's Polish Americans, then, emerges from the intersection of these three things: an ethnic community with multi-generational roots in an urban neighborhood, a national park site that has become a part of that neighborhood, and an NPS program that supports research into the cultural groups who have traditional associations with park resources.

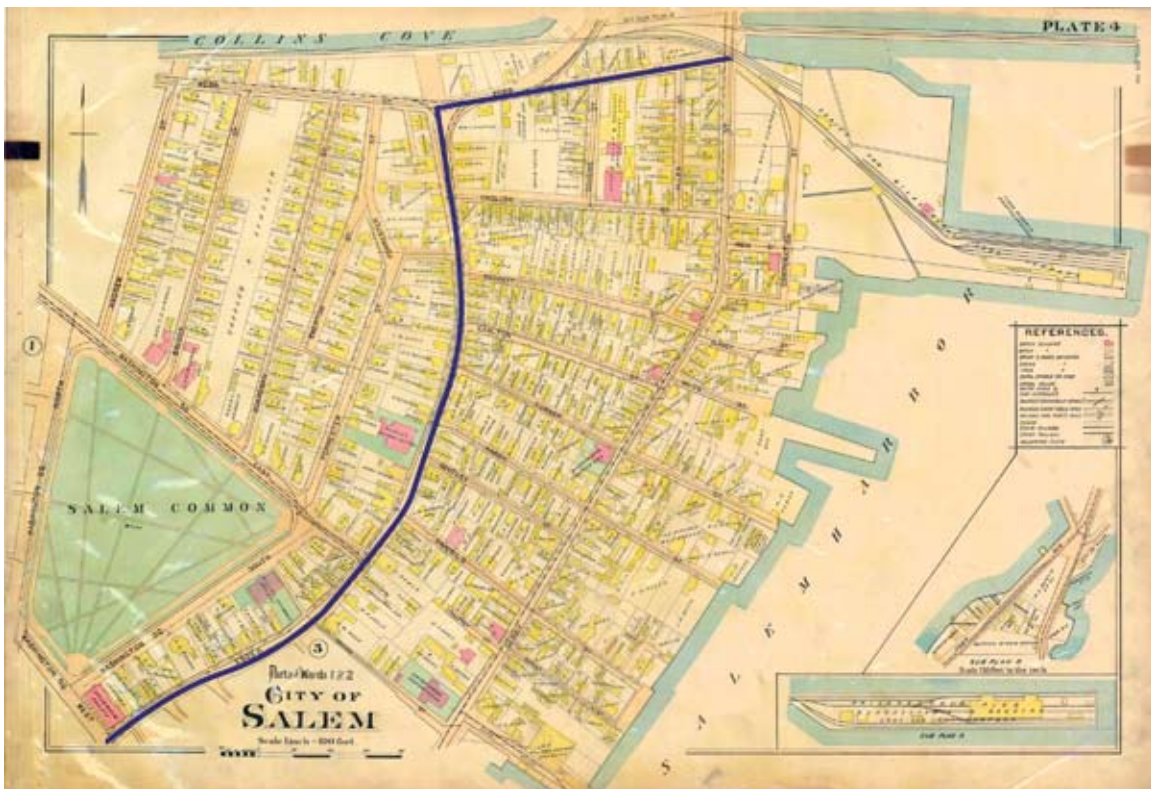


Figure 1 Map showing much of the Derby Street neighborhood in 1897, during the period of heaviest Polish immigration to Salem, with the rough boundaries of the Polish neighborhood outlined. (Essex County Registry of Deeds)

Among the many Polish businesses and organizations that lined Derby Street and the immediate area through most of the twentieth century, the three-story brick home of the St. Joseph Society at 160 Derby Street has a particular significance. Founded in 1899, the St. Joseph Society was among the earliest, possibly the earliest, of many local associations designed to provide civic, economic, educational, and social benefits for Poles in the city. One of the first and most important projects undertaken by the Society

was the founding of a Polish Catholic parish in the city, a vital institution for the majority of Poles within the community. St. Joseph Hall was also unusual in Salem in having been built by Poles for their own use. In a neighborhood and a community where the norm was to adapt existing structures to new uses, this building stands out as a striking reminder of immigrant self-help and resilience in an often-challenging new environment. In its original configuration, the hall housed retail space on the ground floor, a large social and meeting space on the second floor, and dwelling spaces on the third floor that were rented as temporary accommodations to new Polish immigrants and others in need of housing. In addition to meeting a wide range of needs within its own walls, the Hall was also the venue for the creation of other ventures and organizations, such as a political club that did a great deal to establish a Polish presence in city government. To a large extent, the St. Joseph Society was a “first among equals” as a community base for Poles in Salem.

St. Joseph Hall fulfilled this role as a community base for many decades. In the 1940s, the first floor of the hall was converted to a gender-segregated club room with an attached kitchen; the club room became a single space in the 1960s, and continued to be used for social functions.<sup>2</sup> But by the 1980s, the population of the surrounding neighborhood had changed greatly. As with most assimilated ethnic communities, the majority of third- and fourth-generation Polish Americans from Salem did not live in the old ethnic enclaves, but had made their homes elsewhere in the city and the towns around it. The loss of industry in the city meant that people’s work patterns had also changed greatly. This, along with the social, economic, and geographic mobility that came with assimilation and adaptation to a changing economy, contributed to the scattering of what had once been a dense and extremely close-knit urban community. Salem’s Polish Catholic parish remained (and remains) an important gathering-point, but the church is outside the Derby Street neighborhood, and the neighborhood itself had become more of a site of memory than of daily lived experience for most of the people who retained associations with it. In this changed context, the old Polish social clubs around Derby Street, including St. Joseph Hall, became largely indistinguishable from other local bars, and the remaining members of the St. Joseph Society found it increasingly difficult to maintain the building.

In the same decade, Salem Maritime National Historic Site was undergoing a period of expansion and revitalization. Then-Superintendent Cynthia Pollack made the

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<sup>2</sup> Marie Carden, *St. Joseph Hall Historic Structure Report* (Salem, MA: Salem Maritime National Historic Site, 1998[1989]), 56-7.

park an energetic participant in the “Salem Project,” a collaborative effort to improve Salem’s image, promote its maritime and other histories, and attract visitors and new residents and businesses to the city. Given the park’s interpretive focus on Salem’s maritime history and the importance of waterfront areas in most urban revitalization projects, restoration of the wharf area was a priority for the park and its partners.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the park was in search of additional office space and storage for some of its collections. St. Joseph Hall was of interest to Superintendent Pollack, and when the St. Joseph Society put its building up for sale in 1987, the park purchased it, with the sale being completed in December 1988.<sup>4</sup> Structural and cosmetic renovations were started in 1989, and over the next several years the park worked to convert the building for three new uses: maintenance operations on the first floor, an educational and program area on the second, and offices on the third.

However, the Hall was of much more than just logistical interest to the park. As well as expanding the scope of the maritime history it was presenting, Salem Maritime NHS was working to improve its relationships with community groups.<sup>5</sup> Industrial and immigration history have never been a core element of the park’s interpretation, but Pollack and others saw the park’s stewardship of St. Joseph Hall as one way to connect to a larger story about the Salem waterfront area, as well as to build a relationship with a set of park neighbors and others who shared long-time memories and associations with the Derby Street neighborhood. From the outset, as Dave Kayser notes in his Foreword to this report, the park viewed its purchase of the Hall in terms of stewardship rather than mere acquisition. Recognizing the importance of Salem’s Poles in the history of the waterfront neighborhood and the importance of St. Joseph Hall in Salem’s Polish American history, park staff have worked over the past two decades to strengthen the park’s connection with those who carry memories and associations with Derby Street as a mostly-Polish neighborhood. In October of 2005, after the completion of renovations,

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<sup>3</sup> On waterfront revitalization projects, see Stephen J. Craig-Smith and Michael Fagence, eds., *Recreation and Tourism as a Catalyst for Urban Waterfront Redevelopment: An International Survey* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995); Brian Hoyle, “Global and Local Change on the Port-City Waterfront,” *The Geographical Review* 3 (July 2000):395-417; Brian Hoyle et al., eds., *Revitalising the Waterfront: International Dimensions of Dockland Redevelopment* (London and New York : Belhaven Press, 1988); R. Timothy Sieber, “ Waterfront Revitalization in Postindustrial Port Cities of North. America,” *City & Society* 5 (December 1991):120-136.

<sup>4</sup> Carden, *St. Joseph Hall*, xii; Pauline Chase-Harrell, Carol Ely and Stanley Moss.. “Administrative History of the Salem Maritime National Historic Site,” (Boston: National Park Service North Atlantic Regional Office, 1993), 179, 188.

<sup>5</sup> Chase-Herrell et al., “Administrative History,” 182.

the park formally marked its new custodianship of St. Joseph Hall with a well-attended event that included food, speeches, and dancing to live polka music played by a local band with a long connection to the Hall.

The current study was designed to build on the park's connection with Salem's Poles by providing more information about the community's history over time.

Specifically, this study's goals were:

1. to document how members of Salem's Polish community saw themselves as a collective group over time from the period of early immigration through the present,
2. to investigate the role of St. Joseph Hall in the formation and continuity of their identity as a distinct ethnic community in Salem during this period; and
3. to document the ongoing importance and value of the Hall to the contemporary community.

This report explores these and related topics, but it is crucial to note at the outset that this is by no means a comprehensive account of Polish Salem. The chapters that follow will present a narrative about how the community developed and how it shaped (and was shaped by) the Derby Street neighborhood. But the narrative is far from complete, for reasons that will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Memories are often partial; there are many gaps in community knowledge about the earliest period of Poles' settlement in Salem; and archival and secondary sources are also fragmentary, problematic, or difficult to access given the available time for the project. Rather than being an encyclopedic resource on the Polish American presence in Salem, this report is one contribution to an ongoing process of documenting and understanding who this community was and is.

The central participants in that process of doing community history, of course, are community members themselves. Because of its ownership of St. Joseph Hall, Salem Maritime NHS has also become a participant in the ongoing collection and preservation of Polish history in Salem. As part of this current research project, the park hosted two community events, one in September 2008 and a concluding celebration in June 2009 (intended in part to commemorate the May 31, 1909 inauguration of St. Joseph Hall). Further, the park and participating community members are continuing to seek ways to share the work of documenting and celebrating Salem's Poles. The next section will discuss the framework that the National Park Service has developed for understanding and maintaining these kinds of cultural relationships and processes, along with some of the guiding ideas and terms that this report uses in crafting its portrait of Polish Salem over time.



## **Salem's Poles as a "Traditionally Associated People"**

The National Park Service system includes a vast number and variety of landscapes, buildings, artifacts, and other resources. Particular groups of people may see these resources as a part of their own history, cultural identity, and way of life. For instance, national parks may include places that are considered sacred, or that contain plants or animals that are part of a local food system for a particular group. Many parks were constructed in areas that once included residential areas or workplaces. As in the case of St. Joseph Hall in Salem, the park may come into stewardship of a property with a history quite different from what is interpreted at the park. In each case, the groups associated with those uses and histories are considered to have a more in-depth type of association with the resource than would be the case with the public at large or the more general category of "park stakeholders." Park Service policy requires that parks identify and consult with "traditionally associated peoples," defined as those groups with a cultural association that goes back two or more generations and pre-dates the park's creation.<sup>6</sup>

The NPS created an Ethnography Program in 1981 in order to gather knowledge about traditionally associated groups and the ongoing role that park resources may play in constructing and maintaining their cultural and community identities. **Culture**, in the sense that anthropologists use the term, refers to the systems of shared meanings and

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<sup>6</sup>The full text of the management policy pertaining to this definition reads as follows:

"Park ethnographic resources are the cultural and natural features of a park that are of traditional significance to traditionally associated peoples. These peoples are the contemporary park neighbors and ethnic or occupational communities that have been associated with a park for two or more generations (40 years), and whose interests in the park's resources began before the park's establishment. Living peoples of many cultural backgrounds—American Indians, Inuit (Eskimos), Native Hawaiians, African Americans, Hispanics, Chinese Americans, Euro-Americans, and farmers, ranchers, and fishermen—may have a traditional association with a particular park.

"Traditionally associated peoples generally differ as a group from other park visitors in that they typically assign significance to ethnographic resources—places closely linked with their own sense of purpose, existence as a community, and development as ethnically distinctive peoples. These places may be in urban or rural parks and support ceremonial activities or represent birthplaces of significant individuals, group origin sites, migration routes, or harvesting or collecting places. Although these places have historic attributes that are of great importance to the group, they may not necessarily have a direct association with the reason the park was established or be appropriate as a topic of general public interest. Some ethnographic resources might also be traditional cultural properties. A traditional cultural property is one that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places because of its association with cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that are (1) rooted in that community's history, and (2) important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community." (NPS Management Policies, Chapter 5.3.5.3, "Ethnographic Resources," accessed online at <http://www.nps.gov/policy/mp/chapter5.htm>)

behaviors that hold together members of a human group. Ethnographic studies like the present one provide parks with knowledge that can help to inform management decisions about stewardship, preservation, interpretation, and other areas affecting the resource in question. **Ethnography** is a set of research methods used by cultural anthropologists to study living cultures. These methods may include participation in and observation of the culture being studied, interviews, documentation of language and relationships to particular places, and other approaches.<sup>7</sup> Cultural anthropologists also conduct research into the histories of the groups and places they study. Using methods drawn from the disciplines of history and ethnohistory, they may examine archival records and documents in order to understand how a group's past shapes its present way of life. The research team for the Salem Polish study included a cultural anthropologist and a historian.

St. Joseph Hall and Salem's Polish community are an unusually good fit with the NPS definition of traditional association. The community is relatively bounded in both space and time. Although Poles lived in other areas of Salem as well, the Derby Street neighborhood was for many decades the city's most concentrated area of Polish settlement as well as the commercial center for the community. A number of Polish immigrants lived in Salem before the 1880s, but the great majority arrived in the short time span between the 1890s and World War I. There has continued to be migration from Poland to the area, most notably in the past couple of decades, but the Derby Street Polish neighborhood was largely created by a generation or two of immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and most of the people with a sense of connection to St. Joseph Hall are descended from those immigrants.

The research conducted for this project suggests that Salem's Polish American community has remained quite cohesive over time, for a number of reasons. The Polish Catholic church here, unlike many similar ethnic parishes in the U.S., remains open and active and serves as an important center point for the community. Salem's Polish population is relatively small, certainly in comparison with the very large populations in Midwestern centers like Chicago and Buffalo, but also with the larger regional concentrations in Boston, Lowell, or western Massachusetts. This relatively small size has created a tight web of cross-cutting and intersecting ties of kinship and shared memory among Salem's Poles, particularly among the cohort of people who were the primary

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<sup>7</sup>In their focus on living cultures and people, cultural anthropologists are different from archeologists, who work in a branch of anthropology concerned with the material remains of *past* cultures.

participants in this project. We were able to speak with a small number of people whose parents were born in Poland, and even one very elderly woman who came to Salem as a small child in the early part of the twentieth century. But by and large, those whose recollections form the basis for this study are from the third generation in the city—people whose families had made the transition from being “Polish” to being “Polish American.”<sup>8</sup> Most of these people grew up between the 1930s and the 1960s, and their shared experiences of Salem and the Derby Street area reflect a particular period in the histories of the city and the neighborhood, as well as in the development of a sense of Polish American ethnic identity that had by then been largely assimilated into American society.

We have worked hard to avoid two common issues when studying groups of people, particularly groups that have experienced great change in recent generations. The first is the temptation to speak of “the community” as something wholly cohesive or unified. The people we encountered during this study do share a strong sense of collective identity, rooted in their shared descent from the immigrant generation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and their shared customs and values as Polish Americans. However, there is of course a range of experiences and viewpoints among Salem’s Poles as among any group of people. Creating a sense of local or ethnic identity is always an ongoing process, and individuals contribute to and understand their shared identities in varying ways, which may change over time. This report uses the term “the Polish community” throughout, but it is always with the understanding that this community is not a static thing, but multi-faceted and continually in the process of defining itself.<sup>9</sup> A related issue is that there is a clear generational divide between people who grew up in the Derby Street neighborhood when it was primarily Polish—roughly the half-century between the 1910s and 1960s—and those who were born after Poles had become more dispersed throughout the city and surrounding area. This divide creates a tendency to see the past as something quite distinct from the present. In many ways,

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<sup>8</sup> This report generally refers to people in Salem who are of Polish extraction simply as “Poles,” even though these chapters trace the process by which Polish immigrants had become Polish American by the second or third generation after settling in the U.S. Because this transition from being Polish to being Polish American, like all processes of ethnic identity-formation, has been ongoing and non-linear, we have chosen the simpler term except where we are specifically referring to the hybrid aspects of being Polish American.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the problems of approaching “community” as a given (and as an unequivocally positive thing), see Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

it is quite distinct, but we do not wish this study to be framed as merely a recovery of a “lost” past, or to imply that Salem’s Polish community is in any danger of disappearing.<sup>10</sup> It will inevitably change, and probably change greatly, as the people who grew up in the old neighborhood continue to age and as the city itself continues to change. But studies of cultural processes show that communities can be very resilient and adaptable in responding to external changes, including drawing on their own earlier histories in surprising and creative ways.<sup>11</sup> The history of Polish Salem as chronicled in these chapters certainly demonstrates this kind of adaptability and resilience, and the approach we have taken in this study envisions that members of this community will re-shape it in the coming years in ways that are impossible to predict exactly but which will ensure its continuation—and in which Salem Maritime NHS, in its role as steward of St. Joseph Hall, may have some part to play.

Like all communities, then, this one has changed over time and continues to change. How are we to study and understand both the changes and the continuities within Salem’s Polish population? We have already introduced the concepts of culture and “traditionally associated people,” which the National Park Service uses in this kind of study. This section will conclude with a brief exploration of some related ideas that helped to guide the research conducted for this report.

First, Salem’s Poles see themselves as part of larger ethnic group. **Ethnic groups** are composed of people who feel a sense of belonging based on ties of ancestry, kinship, geographic origin, shared attachments to particular places, language use, belief systems, folkways, physical characteristics, names, or other “markers” of ethnicity. For Polish

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<sup>10</sup> This idea of documenting “lost” or “disappearing” cultures has a long lineage within cultural anthropology. For much of the history of the field, anthropologists were driven by a sense that they needed to study the kinds of groups—particularly indigenous and traditional cultures—that appeared to be vanishing under the onslaught of modernity. Anthropologists now see this kind of “salvage ethnography” as deeply flawed, and recognize that all human cultures, even those that are seemingly rooted in place and resistant to change, are continually in flux and continually renegotiating who they are and how they exist in the world. For some key works on the critique of salvage ethnography, see James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988) and Micaela Di Leonardo, *Exotics at Home: Anthropologies, Others, American Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> For examples of these kinds of studies, see Jane Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), particularly Chapter 8; Rachel Breunlin and Helen A. Regis, “Putting the Ninth Ward on the Map: Race, Place, and Transformation in Desire, New Orleans,” *American Anthropologist* 108 (December 2006):744-764.

Americans, as for many migrant groups, ethnicity is connected in many ways with a historical or ancestral homeland, in this case the Polish nation. **Nationalism** is a second important facet to consider in understanding Polish Americans' sense of themselves, particularly in the first two generations of settlement. There is often an assumption that both nations and ethnic groups are natural and self-evident groupings, based on a common ancestry, place-attachment, and inherent qualities among certain kinds of people. However, scholars in recent decades have demonstrated that nations and ethnic groups, like any communities of people, are always works in progress, created and maintained by constant negotiation and sometimes conflict among the people inside and outside of them.<sup>12</sup> Our study approached Polish American ethnicity in this way—that is, as a sense of identity continually being debated, shaped, and expressed by those inside and on the borders of the community, sometimes in relation to a distant nation and ideas about that nation.

These debates and processes do not take place in a vacuum, but are always located in specific places, relationships, and institutions. One additional idea that informed our work, therefore, was the **importance of a particular local setting**—in this case, the small New England maritime city of Salem and especially the Derby Street neighborhood along its waterfront. In some ways, Salem's Polish community reflects broader patterns among Polish Americans, but this is also a unique community of people with its own character and a distinctive set of experiences in this particular place over time. How did existing conditions in Salem—for example, representations of the city's colonial history or the presence of other immigrant ethnic groups—influence Poles' experiences and sense of themselves as a distinct group? Even within a small city, it is difficult to say with certainty how the mix of different factors adds up to create a particular sense of identity.

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<sup>12</sup> For some influential work on ethnicity and nationalism, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), Fredrick Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1969), Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), Abner Cohen, *Urban Ethnicity* (New York: Tavistock, 1974), Cynthia Enloe, *Ethnic Conflict and Political Development* (Boston: Little Brown, 1972), Herbert Gans, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1962), Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983). For an outstanding study on the ways in which processes of ethnic and national self-definition have played out among Poles in the U.S., see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish and Jewish Immigrants in the U.S.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

But by listening to what people say about their encounters with other groups within a city, it is possible to gain a better understanding of how the landscape and demography of the city itself influence that sense of identity.

These processes of encounter and expression take place continually, including in ordinary and everyday ways. But for the purposes of studying and documenting a sense of collective identity, there are special advantages to exploring what happens in organizational and institutional life, because those are often the settings where people feel compelled to clarify and express how they see themselves and their community. Our research, then, examined the **role of institutions and organizations** as sites where shared identities are defined and articulated. These institutions and organizations very often also leave material evidence—for example, written and photographic records—that provide important information about the life of a community over time. The St. Joseph Society and its Hall offered a research site through which we could examine how the first generation of Polish immigrants formed a community, the central (but often hotly debated) role of the Polish Roman Catholic Church, the principles of self-reliance and mutuality, and the effects of assimilation and mobility on an ethnic enclave over time. Memories and records from the House of Seven Gables,<sup>13</sup> geographically very close to St. Joseph Hall but representing a very different set of social and cultural experiences, gave us a window into Poles' encounters with Yankee Salem, with ideas about America, and with other immigrants in the setting of an early twentieth-century "settlement house." This report is largely structured around these kinds of specific places and institutions, along with the everyday spaces of life in the Polish neighborhood. We now turn to a discussion of how the research for the report was conducted, and what the principal accomplishments and limitations of our data-collection were.

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<sup>13</sup> The full name of this institution is The House of the Seven Gables, but following local colloquial usage, we refer to it in this report as the House of Seven Gables, or, more informally, "the Gables."

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

This section will begin by listing and commenting on the most significant of the materials that we drew on for this study. (The Annotated Bibliography provides more information about the specific written sources.)

### **Photographs**

Photographs of people and places from Salem's Polish community exist in a range of locations and forms.

- Salem Maritime NHS holds the nucleus of a collection relating to the community and St. Joseph Hall. Some of these, along with various artifacts and documents, were found in the Hall itself when the park acquired it. A listing of the contents of this collection can be found as Appendix D. A more comprehensive listing of materials and images already in the park's own collections and files relating to the Polish presence in the neighborhood would be a valuable addition to the park's holdings and a useful resource for those conducting future research on the neighborhood.
- The park also has images in its general photographic archive that show the Derby Street neighborhood at and shortly after the time of the park's creation in 1938—i.e. in a period when this was primarily a Polish neighborhood.
- The private collection of Linda Moustakis has been an extremely rich and important source of photographs, showing a wide range of times, places, people, and kinds of activities. Many of the images in the storefront exhibit currently in St. Joseph Hall are drawn from this collection. Along with the images used in the exhibit, the park has digitized other photographs provided by Linda. Some detailed information about these photographs is available, but there are gaps in what is known about the people and events depicted. Participants at the September 2008 gathering were invited to supply names and dates if possible, and some information was gained in this way.
- Other community members have supplied photographs over the past several years, and the park has digitized a number of these for its collection. Some new additions were made during this project as well. A number of photocopied images are included in the files from John Frayler's 2002 survey, but the actual origin or ownership of these is not always clear.

- The House of Seven Gables archive also contains an abundant trove of photographs relevant to this study. Staff generously granted us access to these materials, which provided a visual window into many of the social activities referenced by our interviewees—for example, children’s and women’s clubs, ethnic celebrations, and after-school activities.

## **Written/Printed Primary Sources**

Much of the historical record relating to Polish Salem is not to be found in institutional repositories. And while several studies were undertaken of Salem’s Poles in the twentieth century, the results were never published or even systematically collected and archived in an accessible place. The Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company Records are the only relevant collection that has been inventoried, processed, and made accessible at a research library—Baker Library at Harvard Business School. Moreover, many of the historical resources are still “live” in the sense that they remain with the organizations or individuals that created them. Some of our historical research relies upon unpublished reports and research papers, ranging from the work of college students such as Dan Campbell, Elizabeth Borkowski, and Graziella Gambale, to National Register nominations for the House of Seven Gables Historic District and a proposed Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company Historic District (a draft only), to the detailed town history survey undertaken by the Massachusetts Historical Commission in 1985. Other unpublished resources are more closely associated with the Polish community, such as Edward Carberg’s research into the neighborhood. The challenge with all such sources is to consider their origins and their authors and the purposes of the documents, and try to find corroboration in other sources.

- Street atlases and city directories  
These foundational materials provided a baseline of information about the Derby Street neighborhood, upon which we have drawn in many ways. In particular, the street atlases from the years 1897 (early in the formation of the Polish community in Salem), 1911 (during the peak period of immigration), and 1906-38 (when the Derby Street neighborhood was primarily Polish) give invaluable snapshots of the community over time. We surveyed the street atlases for selected streets (including Derby Street) at five-year intervals to gather a base of information about population and occupancy patterns in the neighborhood, as



well as examining particular streets and years more closely in order to investigate questions about particular families, sites, and organizations.

- Baker Library, Harvard Business School (Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company Collection)

Includes records of Board of Directors' meetings which shed light on the 1918 strike at the Pequot Mill.

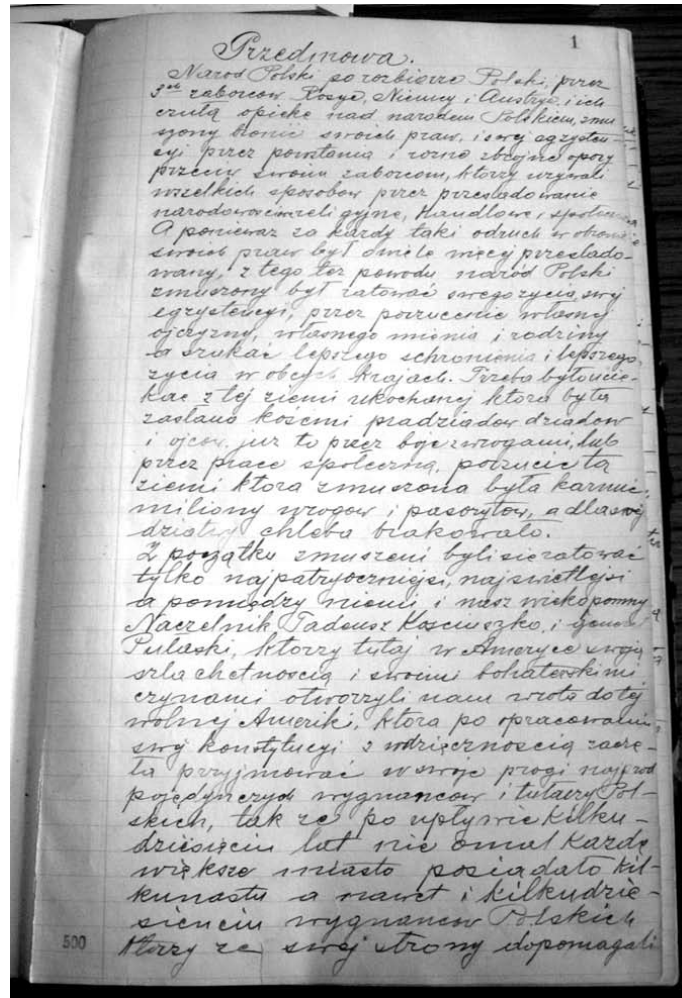


Figure 2 The first page of the handwritten records of the St. Joseph Society, probably produced by Teofil Bartnicki.

- Salem Maritime NHS collection

The park's collection includes a handwritten record of the first thirty-five years of minutes of the meetings of the St. Joseph Society. This record, covering the years 1899 through approximately 1934, is contained in a large bound

ledger book, and is written in Polish (Figure 2). In 2000, Salem Maritime NHS commissioned a translation of the text for the years 1897 to 1909 (the year the Hall was completed), which was completed by Ewa Newman. (The full text of Newman's translation is included in this report as Appendix C.) This source, while crucial and detailed, also raises many questions. It appears to be the work primarily of one person, likely Teofil Bartnicki, long-time member of the Society and its President for a short time. Anecdotal evidence from members of the Bartnicki family suggest that Teofil was indeed the author or transcriber.<sup>14</sup> Our observations lead us to believe that this was a "retrospective" project—that is, not written at the time of the events it records, but compiled at a later date or dates. It is not known what sources the author/transcriber was working from, over how long a period it was written, what his relationship to the Society was at the time(s) when the record was made, or what his reasons were for undertaking the project. All of these unanswered questions mean that this essential document requires an additional layer of interpretation, beyond the interpretation of the events recorded in the book. Additional artifacts and materials in the park's collection include formal group photographs, insurance record books, and items of regalia.

- House of Seven Gables Archives, Salem, Massachusetts (House of the Seven Gables Settlement Association Records)  
The hundred-year history of the House of Seven Gables is immensely rich in information about Salem, the settlement house movement, and—because of the Gables' location and social mission in "the Polish neighborhood" during the twentieth century—Polish Salem. The institution's archive, which includes its Annual Reports, has not yet been fully inventoried or processed.
- Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts  
This collection also includes the House of Seven Gables Annual Reports, among other relevant materials.
- St. John the Baptist Polish Roman Catholic Church Archives, Salem, Massachusetts  
The church's records include Birth, Death, and Marriage Records, as well as sources relating to the church's life with the community and daily administration.

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<sup>14</sup> Linda Moustakis, granddaughter of Teofil Bartnicki, reports one of her cousins' recollections of seeing their grandfather spending a good deal of time writing in a "big book"—probably this record book—during the cousin's childhood in the 1930s. The book begins with an overview of Polish history, suggesting that Bartnicki's project was to compile a history of the St. Joseph Society within a somewhat broader historical context. The record refers to a 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary history of the "St. Joseph Society of Brotherly Help," which was not found in the research for this report. This publication would likely contain additional details about the early days of the society.

These records have not been systematically identified, described or stored to encourage preservation. The church also holds some records of St. John's School, going back to the early decades of the 20th century.

### **Written Secondary Sources**

- Histories of Salem
- NPS-commissioned studies on Salem Maritime NHS resources  
Of particular importance was Amy Friedlander's 1991 work "Salem Maritime National Historic Site, Historical Research 1626-1990," which provided invaluable data on changes in the built and demographic environment around the core park area over time. Marie Carden's 1998 Historic Structure Report on St. Joseph Hall was also valuable in documenting the building over time, although some of its historical details require checking.
- Histories of Poland
- Historical, cultural, and other studies of Polish America
- Studies of industrialization and deindustrialization in New England
- Studies of the mutual assistance and settlement house movements
- General studies of immigration
- General labor/industrial histories on related topics

### **Previous Ethnohistorical Studies of Poles in Salem**

- Salem State College graduate immigration seminar papers, 1974  
This project included an extensive paper by Elizabeth Borkowski about Salem's Polish community, along with research into Polish enclaves in neighboring cities. The manuscript is in the Phillips Library.
- House of the Seven Gables oral history project, 1978  
Conducted as part of a CETA-funded program in the summer of 1978, this project trained local high school students connected with the Gables to interview a range of people associated with the organization over time. This included many Polish Americans of various ages, among them several first- and second-generation Poles in Salem. The persistence and generosity of the Gables staff resulted in the discovery of this important collection. These are significant resources that

should be transferred from cassette tapes to CD and fully transcribed. Although for our purposes the results are somewhat limited because of the central focus on the Gables itself and the interviewers' lack of contextual knowledge for understanding people's recollections, these interviews offer access into a previous generation's memories and experiences, otherwise unavailable to us.

- John Frayler/Salem Maritime NHS survey of Polish Americans in Salem, 2002  
The files of former park historian John Frayler include many photographs and written memories offered by people with long-time associations with the neighborhood and Polish American organizations. These files are not yet inventoried or organized.
- Salem State College "Salem in History" project, 2006  
Produced as part of a Teaching American History grant, this project includes a short film with excerpts from oral history interviews with Polish Americans from Salem.
- Hunter, Floyd, Ruth Connor Schaffer, and Cecil Ships. 1956. *Community Organization: Action and Inaction*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.  
A sociological study of Salem in the 1950s, including a detailed case study of the Polish community which provides insight into relationships with the parish and debates over the building of the new parochial school.

## Ethnographic Interviewing

In any ethnographic research project, members of the community themselves are among the most powerful sources and voices speaking about their shared and individual pasts and present. For this project, 20 interviews were conducted, taped, and partially or completely transcribed. Interviewees were selected through a "snowball sampling" method, starting with known members of Salem's Polish community who had some familiarity with the park and then building on those contacts to identify others with knowledge about the Derby Street neighborhood, the St. Joseph Society and Hall, and related topics. We attempted to find people who could help us to understand the role of the church, Polish school, military service, and political activity in the community, and those who represented, to as great an extent as possible, a range of generational experiences spanning from the first through the third generation of Poles in Salem. Interviewees ranged in age from around 60 to nearly 100. Some key figures were chosen because of their unique and particularly deep-rooted knowledge of the community over

time—for example, first-generation immigrant Mary Nowak and longtime bandleader Buddy Walker. Others were selected because their involvement with a range of organizations in Polish Salem helped us to understand the network of interconnections among groups and people—for example, among political, fraternal, veterans', religious, and cultural organizations and projects. We also sought a gender balance in interviewing, particularly as we came to realize how the tight-knit world of Polish Salem was also, in many ways, a very gendered world, with male and female social spheres that overlapped but were also highly distinct. As the research developed and we were able to see more clearly how the specific history of Poles in Salem related to the larger trajectories of Polish immigration to America in general, we were able to identify people whose families had come from particular parts of Poland and whose experiences thus illuminated some of the broader history of the Polish diaspora in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Finally, we talked to people who had grown up both in and outside the Derby Street neighborhood itself, to gain a clearer sense of how this particular place—the heart of Polish Salem—related to other parts of the city where Poles lived and worked.

Recorded interviews were from just under an hour to two hours in length. Interview topics typically included family background, work, education, religion, social and political organizations and activities, and changes in the Derby Street neighborhood over time. A complete list of interviewees and interview dates is included as Appendix A.

In addition, we made use of the collection of 1978 oral history interviews described above, conducted by volunteers at the House of Seven Gables. We partially or completely transcribed eight of these interviews, including digitizing three of the most significant for this project.

In this report, we have drawn liberally on quotes from these interviews. Where quoted material is not specifically cited, it comes from the 2008 interviews.

## **Data Analysis**

As we gathered materials from these various sources, we weighed different options for compiling them into a composite description of Salem's Polish American community. The three most obvious approaches were:

- a chronological narrative about the community over time
- a place-based approach, linking specific sites and buildings (particularly St. Joseph Hall) with the community's history
- a thematic approach (for example, focusing in turn on social life, religion, politics, education, etc.)

Each of these approaches, however, posed real challenges. Gaps remain in much of the evidence we were able to compile. For example, there may be more records of the St. Joseph Society than we were able to locate for this project. For some years these records were kept at the secretary's house, but many of them were later transferred to St. John the Baptist Church for safekeeping. The bulk of the Society's records may have been lost; we were unable to determine with certainty what may still exist, if anything, beyond the materials at the church and those that are in the park's collection. There are also significant gaps in community recollection or knowledge of the earliest years of Polish life in Salem, the period of fiercest debate about what it mean to be Polish and Polish American. This gap may be due in part to the effects of assimilation and generational change, and perhaps also in part to a tendency in many of our interviewees' families not to want to dwell on old memories or past conflicts, something that several people mentioned in interviews. In attempting to understand the first decades of the Polish presence in Salem, we are relying on quite fragmentary written evidence (for example, the handwritten record book with the minutes of the St. Joseph Society up to 1909), general knowledge gained from research in secondary sources, and bits of recollection and information from community members.

The "raw data" of maps, school records, and street lists contributed additional material, but pursuing this kind of source in a wholesale way (for instance, copying lists of students at the Polish school) is of limited use without a larger context for assessing and understanding the information. For example, census records list late nineteenth century immigrants to Salem by nationality, but because "Poland" itself did not exist as a country between 1795 and 1918, people who might have identified themselves as ethnically or nationally Polish were often counted as German, Prussian, Austrian, or Russian for immigration or census purposes. American census categories also changed over time and did not always capture all aspects of a person's identity, particularly in the case of Jews who were also Poles or Germans, or people of mixed descent from multi-ethnic regions like Galicia.<sup>15</sup> It is possible to trace individual family names through census records and street or school lists, but selecting names to trace requires a certain amount of foreknowledge of the community and the context, which must be gained in other ways.

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<sup>15</sup> For discussion of this issue in relation to Polish immigration, see Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York: Columbia University, 1990), 215 and James S. Pula, *Polish Americans: An Ethnic Community* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), 19.

In general, our work for this study concentrated on gaining a sense of a larger context, on the assumption that our groundwork will be of use to others who can supply more detailed information about particular families. This report does offer some individual stories and histories, but more as an illustration of the kind of work that might be done, rather than as an attempt to document the community in its entirety, since that was beyond the scope of what this project could accomplish.

As well, in compiling a community description like this one, researchers are often dependent on what comes to hand rather than being able to pursue an ideal plan every step of the way. The thumbnail portraits of particular people included in this report were chosen in part because of what they reveal about certain kinds of Polish experiences in Salem, but also because particular participants and sources in the study could provide us with more detailed information about those people. With more time to pursue leads and connect small pieces of data, a more nuanced picture would of course emerge; the current report represents the picture we were able to assemble within our time frame and the range of different resources we consulted.

We have been able to document the experiences of the third generation much more fully than those of earlier generations, thanks to the vivid remembrances of many of the people who participated in the ethnographic interviews. These interviews, which serve as the foundation for Chapter Six, give us a wonderfully rich picture of life in Polish Salem in the middle decades of the twentieth century, and in many ways they are the centerpiece of this study. It is important to note, though, that memory and interviewing bring their own challenges as a source for compiling a description of a community. The subjectivity of memory makes it an extraordinarily vibrant and often highly detailed resource, and a collection of interviews, such as we conducted for this project, can present a compelling portrait of a cultural group in time and place. At the same time, ethnographic and oral history interviews themselves are productions of the moment, always shaped by circumstances and interactions between interviewees and interviewers. They have an undeniable authority in that they articulate the memories and perceptions of people who lived the experiences that are being narrated. They can become even richer, however, when they are considered alongside other kinds of sources which can

illuminate different aspects or interpretations of experience and bring together multiple voices and perspectives in ways that individual recollections cannot always do.<sup>16</sup>

This report, then, is based on a number of types of data, all of them, in their own ways, partial or warranting further investigation. Our interview material allows us to paint quite a vivid picture of life in Polish Salem in the middle part of the twentieth century, but it does not extend far beyond that time period. For the crucial early period in which the community was being settled and formed, we gathered pieces of information from a variety of sources (records such as the St. Joseph Society minutes, maps, street directories, some family materials provided during interviews, earlier ethnohistorical projects, secondary literature, and a small amount from the interviews themselves). There is something of a division, then, between the largely “first-person” portrait of third-generation Salem and the account we are able to give of the earlier period, which is based more on secondary and documentary sources. In addition, we were able to learn a considerable amount about some specific places and institutions in the community (for example, the St. Joseph Society and Hall, Polish activities at the House of Seven Gables, and St. John the Baptist Church and School) and much less about others that appeared to be equally important in the community at various times, such as the Polish Falcons and the two Polish National Alliance chapters (the St. John Society and the “Three Nickels”/ Group 555). Given the unevenness of our overall data, we decided to split the difference among the possible approaches to structuring this report (chronological, place-based, or thematic). Instead of using any one approach throughout, we use elements of each in order to capitalize on the different strengths of our various materials.

Following ethnographic and historical convention, we have “triangulated” our data—that is, used various sources to check, verify, and illustrate others. This was a particularly useful technique in reading the St. Joseph Society records, which contain a wealth of facts but very little context for understanding what those facts meant in the life of Polish Salem. For example, there are many notations of payments to members for sick benefits in the early days of the Society, including some occasions when relatively

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<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of issues in the relationship between individual oral histories and cultural or collective memory, see Paula Hamilton and Linda Shopes, eds., *Oral History and Public Memory* (Temple University Press, 2008). For an older but still important discussion of the dynamics of interviewing, see Michael Frisch, “The Memory of History” in *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), pp. 15-27 and, from a more anthropological perspective, Harry Wolcott, “Getting Nosy” in *The Art of Fieldwork* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira, 2005), pp. 95-110.



new members were compensated without argument and others where the membership apparently protested the payment of benefits to someone who had only joined recently. Material from the secondary historical literature on fraternal and mutual aid societies helps us to understand the complicated negotiations about who was considered a full-fledged member of an organization or an ethnic group, while specific knowledge about family names and relationships in Polish Salem sheds light on the differing status of “insiders” and “outsiders” in the community. Taken together, these three types of data—the handwritten minutes, the secondary literature, and detailed knowledge of particular families’ histories in Salem—show us how organizations like the St. Joseph Society supported their members and the community at large, but always within an atmosphere of testing of who belonged and contributed to that community.

An outline of the remaining chapters of the report follows, but this section will conclude by noting once again that this project is one piece of a much longer process of documenting, preserving, and commemorating the history of Poles in Salem. The report is not a linear tour through either time or space, but a partial image of a community over time, drawing on disparate, partial sources and containing many gaps. We see those gaps as opportunities for continued community input and construction of documented history and shared memories, a process to which we hope this project will contribute something of value.

## Outline of This Report

The first three sections of Chapter One have provided context and background for this ethnographic study of Polish Americans in Salem, Massachusetts. Beginning with a general overview, it has explained some of the management frameworks and scholarly understandings that underlie the project. It has also discussed the types of research done and types of materials gathered, along with a discussion of how the data from those materials were analyzed.

Chapter Two, “Immigrants and Industry: Early Polish Settlement in the Derby Street Area,” asks about the neighborhood in which Poles were arriving starting in the late nineteenth century. How did Salem’s waterfront fit within what was then a changing industrial city, and how did it emerge from an earlier age dominated by maritime trade? Conversely, where were the Polish migrants coming *from*? This chapter briefly surveys both Salem’s history and the history of Poland in order to create a context for

understanding the Polish-dominated neighborhood that developed along the city's waterfront after the 1890s. Using the experiences of one family, the Sobocinskis, as a case study, this chapter will focus particularly on the period from the 1870s, when the main period of Polish immigration to the city began, through the turn of the twentieth century. It discusses the history of the establishment of the St. Joseph Society, the first and in many ways the most significant of the mutual assistance associations that Salem's Poles created to support their new community. The founding of the Society shows some of the regional and other differences that Poles worked to surmount in creating a sense of collective identity in their new home, and the chapter concludes with an exploration of some of those differences, and how they were reflected in the stories of particular members of the Salem community.

Chapters Three through Six are roughly chronological, although they necessarily jump back and forth somewhat in time to reflect particular stories and experiences. Chapter Three, "Making Salem Home: Social and Spiritual Infrastructure in the Immigrant Community, 1899-1909," begins an exploration of some specific sites within the Derby Street neighborhood that show how Poles put down deeper roots in the city in the early twentieth century. This chapter continues Chapter One's focus on the experiences of the immigrant generation, in a period characterized by considerable flux and contestation over ethnic and regional identities, religious authority, dynamic relationships to both the Polish homeland and American society, economic and political struggles, and the establishment of many kinds of support mechanisms for everyday life in the community. In particular, it explores the key events of the founding of a Polish Catholic parish in Salem and the 1909 construction of St. Joseph Hall as a permanent home for the St. Joseph Society.

Chapter Four, "Economic Life in Polish Salem, 1899-1939" focuses on various aspects of people's work and economic lives in the Derby Street neighborhood, beginning with the mutual assistance functions of the St. Joseph Society and moving outward to consider Poles' experiences working in the city's leather and textile industries. The chapter describes two imagined walks along Derby Street—Salem's "Polish Main Street"—in 1912 and 1938, taking note of the kinds of businesses and organizations that occupied the storefronts and the kinds of changes that took place between the peak period of Polish immigration and the eve of the Second World War. The year 1914 is examined for its local and transnational significance for Salem's Poles: the main period

of Polish immigration ended abruptly in that year with the outbreak of World War I, and the devastating Salem Fire altered many physical aspects of the city's waterfront neighborhood where most of the Polish immigrants had settled.

Chapter Five, "Becoming Polish American: Two Sites of Transition," examines in some detail two locations in the neighborhood that served as homes to a variety of Polish organizations and clubs. At the first, 9 Daniels Street, the Polish American Citizens Club and Women's Polish American Citizens Club helped to create a vigorous political network that asserted Poles' presence in city and regional decision-making. The second, an old firehouse at the corner of Bentley and Derby Streets, was the venue for rehearsals of the Chopin Choral Society and later for the meetings of the Polish Legion of American Veterans, among other groups. Taken together, the histories of these two sites help to shed light on how both men and women of the second generation of Poles in Salem negotiated the multiple demands and opportunities of Polish ethnicity and nationalism along with American citizenship and identity.

Focusing roughly on the period from the 1930s to the 1960s, Chapter Six, "Growing Up Polish American: The Third Generation of Poles in Salem," offers an overview of the recollections and sense of community experienced by the grandchildren of the immigrant generation. This chapter offers case studies of two complementary institutions devoted largely to youth—St. John the Baptist School and the House of Seven Gables—and concludes by revisiting St. Joseph Hall and the other social clubs to examine how the functions of these spaces and organizations had changed with the growing assimilation of the ethnic community that created and sustained them.

The report concludes with Chapter Seven, "Neighbors and Partners: Polish Salem and Salem Maritime NHS Today," which poses questions about how community members and the national park site can strengthen their relationship and act as co-curators of the growing body of knowledge about the history of Poles in the city. The chapter includes an overview of the neighborhood and the community today. It notes the geographic dispersal and increasing age of most of the people who have first-hand memories of growing up in the old neighborhood, as well as the effects of changes in Salem's Polish Catholic parish, gentrification of the waterfront area, and the enduring of family customs and networks of association in these changing contexts. The chapter also contains recommendations for the future of the relationship between the park and people with attachments to the Polish neighborhood, and notes on some possible areas for future research and presentation of knowledge about the community.

## CHAPTER TWO

### IMMIGRANTS AND INDUSTRY:

### EARLY POLISH SETTLEMENT IN SALEM AND THE

### FOUNDING OF THE SAINT JOSEPH SOCIETY

In May 1887, a seventeen-year-old Polish immigrant named Felix Soboczinski arrived in Salem to begin establishing a new home for his family. According to stories and materials passed down in the Sobocinski<sup>1</sup> family, Felix's father, Joseph, had become frustrated, like so many other Poles, with the limited opportunities available to them in what was then occupied territory. Joseph came from a family that had been land-owners, an important sign of achievement and status in Polish society.<sup>2</sup> But with the division of Poland into three "partitions" occupied by Germany/Prussia, Austria, and Russia in the late eighteenth century, Joseph had become a forester working on German-owned land rather than a property-holder in his own right. Hoping for better fortune for his six sons and two daughters, he worked to save enough money for one passage to America—a total of \$36 at that time—and followed the fairly common plan of having a younger family

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<sup>1</sup>The name was originally spelled "Soboczinski," but the "z" was dropped by some family members shortly after the turn of the century. This report will use whichever spelling the individual family member(s) themselves used. Information about the Sobocinski family was obtained from family genealogical records and newspaper clippings supplied by Dorothy Filip and Joan Pizzello, as well as from interviews with the two women and from a 1978 interview with Wanda Walczak, a Sobocinski family descendant. Wanda Walczak also spoke about her family's history at a 1988 Polish festival and in a paper called "Under the Shadow of Nathaniel Hawthorne," delivered to the Polish Business and Professional Women's Club of Greater Boston in May 1979. A copy of this talk is in the Salem Maritime NHS files. The speech seems to draw on a c. 1952 newspaper article from "The Shoreline," "'Happiest Family' in All the World," also provided by family members, which profiled Felix in his later years in Newmarket, New Hampshire.

There are some discrepancies in dates and other information among these various sources. For instance, Wanda Walczak's written account of her family's history states that the entire family had come to the U.S. by 1892, whereas a newspaper story about the fiftieth wedding anniversary of Wladyslaw and Franckiska Sobocinski, as well as the family genealogy provided by Joan Pizzello and Dorothy Filip, states that 1899 was the year that the couple and their children emigrated. Resolving these kinds of discrepancies would require more detailed research in census and other data. This report has made judgments based on various kinds of information; for example, on the question of when Wladyslaw Sobocinski arrived, we note that his name does not appear on the list of founders of the St. Joseph Society in the first attempt to create the society in 1897, but that he is listed there on the second attempt in 1899, which seems to support the view that he may not have been in Salem until that year.

<sup>2</sup>Pula, *Polish Americans*, 17.

member, in this case his second-youngest son, Felix, make the trip, find work, and send for other family members over time. One wrinkle in this plan—again, not unusual among Poles in the occupied territories—was that it was illegal for Felix to leave the country until he had fulfilled his obligatory German military service. He travelled, therefore, under the passport of his older brother Frank, who had already served.

At a time when most Polish immigrants to Salem arrived via Boston, New York, or some other large port, Felix seems to have come directly into Salem Harbor itself, sailing on a small English cargo ship with room for just over a dozen passengers. According to an account written by his niece, Wanda Walczak, Felix had three dollars left in his pocket when the ship docked at Derby Wharf on “a beautiful warm sun shiny day” in May 1887.<sup>3</sup> Some German sailors on the ship pointed him toward the home of a family named Kulakowski, one of only a handful of Polish families in Salem at that time, who lived nearby and rented lodging. Felix had arrived in the New World.

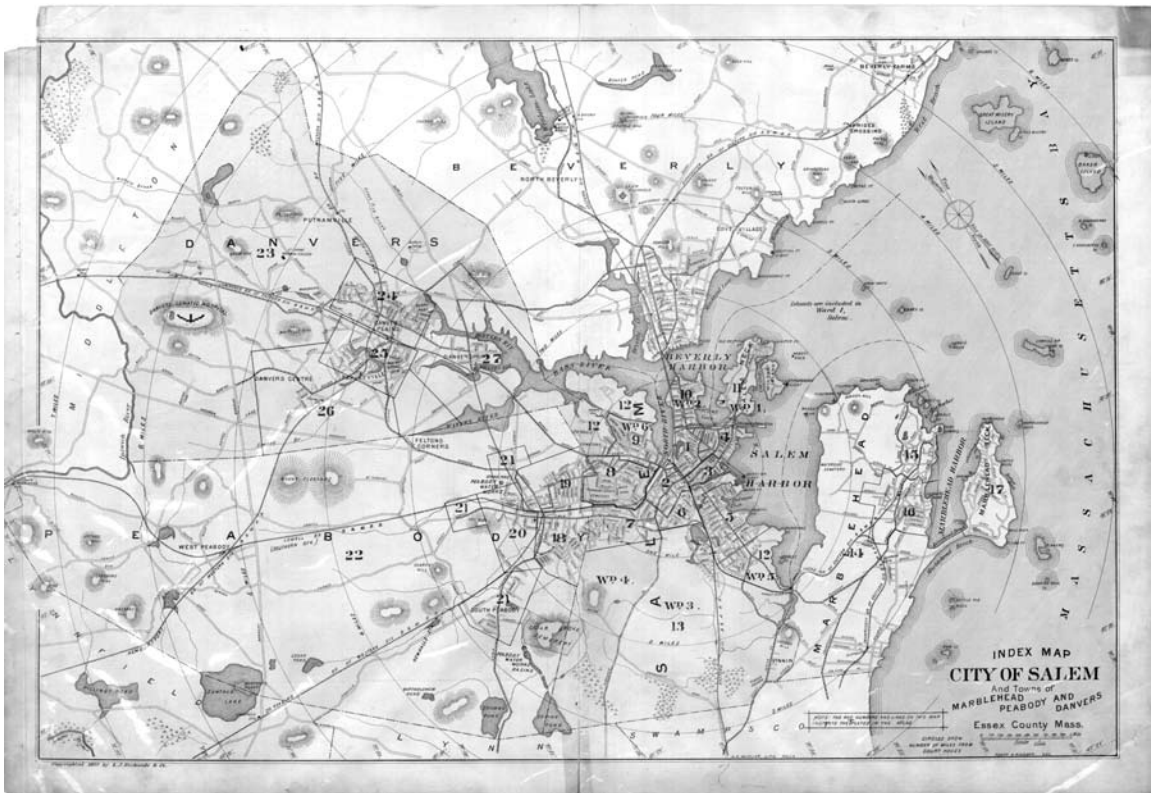


Figure 3 The city of Salem in 1897, during the period when Poles were beginning to settle there in sizeable numbers. (Essex County Registry of Deeds)

<sup>3</sup> Wanda Walczak, “Under the Shadow of Nathaniel Hawthorne,” Paper presented to the Polish Business and Professional Women’s Club of Greater Boston (May 4, 1979), 1.

What did he see when he stood on Derby Wharf? What was this small New England city that he had come to? And what of the place that he had left behind? How had the conditions arisen that convinced the Sobocinskis they would be better off making a fresh start in the United States? How did their background and experiences compare with others who came to Salem and eventually constituted a Polish neighborhood here? This chapter will lay some groundwork for exploring the places that the immigrants were coming from, the Salem they settled in, and how the city's Polish community began to take root and develop.

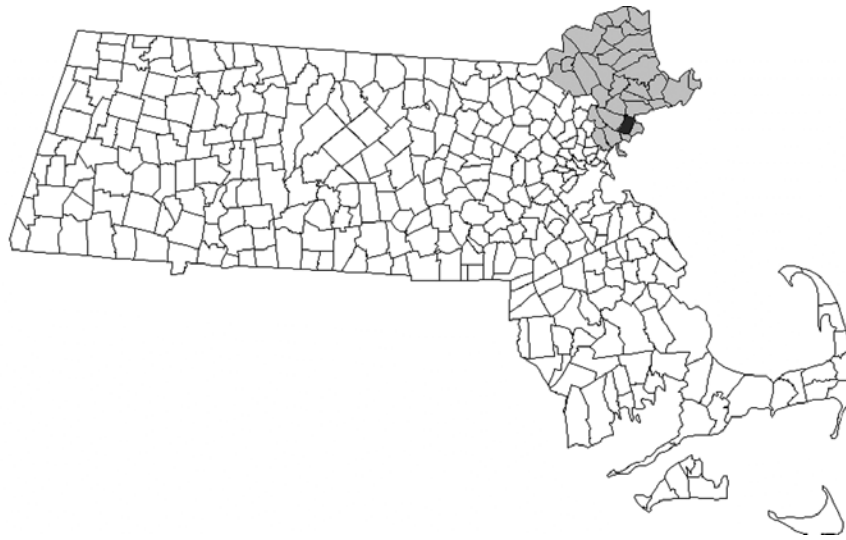


Figure 4 Salem is the county seat of Essex County, in northeastern Massachusetts. (Massachusetts Secretary of State)

## Pre-industrial Salem

Salem, Massachusetts is a small city largely defined by water. It occupies a peninsula of land surrounded by the present-day North River, Collins Cove, Beverly Harbor, and South River (Figure 5). These various bodies of water open into Salem Sound and then to the Atlantic Ocean. A group of Pawtucket or Penacook Natives, part of the Pawtucket tribe that inhabited much of the coast from the Mystic River in Connecticut to Casco Bay in Maine, lived here and were known by the name they gave the place: Naumkeag, an Algonquian word for “fishing place.”<sup>4</sup> There may have been as many

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<sup>4</sup> Emerson W. Baker II, “Salem as Frontier Outpost,” in *Salem: Place, Myth, and Memory*, edited by Dane Anthony Morrison and Nancy Lusignan Schultz (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 21-23.

as 200 natives living in the area during the contact period, but a major pandemic from 1616-1619 introduced a disease that killed most of the Native population in the coastal areas of Massachusetts. Their numbers dwindled further with subsequent epidemics and competition with the colonists for land.<sup>5</sup>

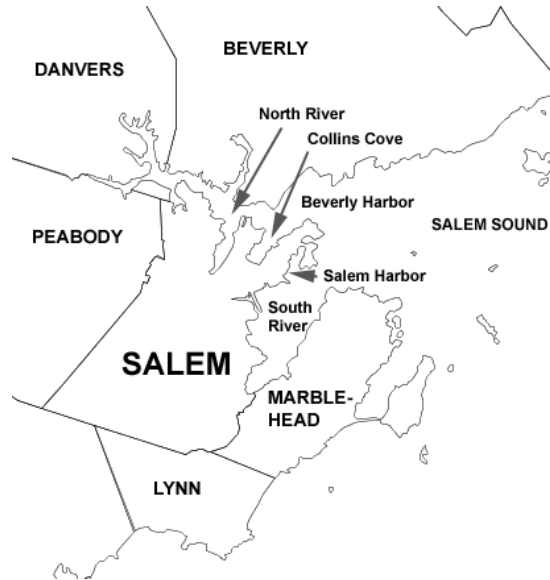


Figure 5 Salem, a small city largely defined by water, originally included land now in several neighboring towns, including those shown on this map. (Massachusetts Secretary of State)

Europeans first established a town in this place in 1626, when a group of Pilgrims broke off from the settlement at Plymouth and came north with their leader, Roger Conant, calling their new home “Naumkeag.” Other English settlers followed, and by 1629 the settlement was renamed “Salem,” or “place of peace.” The town grew quickly, with the population initially concentrated between the North and South Rivers.<sup>6</sup> These newcomers were farmers and fishermen—maritime resources were especially important at Salem, and maritime trades developed early in Salem’s history.<sup>7</sup> There were already half

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<sup>5</sup> Baker, “Salem as Frontier Outpost,” 25, 30.

<sup>6</sup> MHC, “Reconnaissance Survey,” 7-9.

<sup>7</sup> Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), “Reconnaissance Survey Town Report: Salem” (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Commission, 1985), 2, 7; Amy Friedlander, “Salem Maritime National Historic Site, Historical Research 1626-1990” (New Jersey: Cultural Resource Group, 1991), 7; U.S. Department of the Interior/National Park Service, “The Salem Project: Study of Alternatives” (1990), 124, 126.

a dozen shipbuilders in the town by 1629, plus other small industries such as copper and glassworks, a pottery, ironworks, and several tanneries in addition to the usual corn, grist, and fulling mills. Abundant cod supported a lucrative fishing trade, and other goods were traded by Salem's mariners as well; its first custom house was built in 1645.<sup>8</sup>

As Salem became more diverse and more oriented toward trade rather than small-scale farming and fishing, tensions developed among the various groups of clergy, merchants, artisans, farmers, and others in the town. The diverging cultures and interests of these different groups may have contributed to the most infamous episode in Salem's history, the witchcraft hysteria and ensuing trials of 1692.<sup>9</sup> By the early eighteenth century, the town's economic, political, and social center of gravity had largely shifted to its commercial waterfront along Derby Street, from which ships carried fish to markets as far away as Spain and rum that had been distilled from imported sugar and molasses.<sup>10</sup> A town of 1,500 people in 1683, Salem grew to more than 5,300 by the beginning of the American Revolution. Most were English Congregationalists, but the population also included Scots, Irish, French, and African-Americans.<sup>11</sup> The first Roman Catholic services in the town were held in 1806, and the first Catholic church in Essex County, St. Mary's, was built in 1821 on Bridge Street, prefiguring the much larger populations of Irish, Italian, French Canadian, Polish, and other Catholics who would move to the city by later in the century.<sup>12</sup> Foreign trade slowed during the Revolution, but rebounded quickly afterward. Between 1775 and 1830, a period that is often seen as Salem's "golden age," its population almost tripled, to 14,000 people in 1830, and the town achieved a prominent position in the lucrative business of buying and selling between New England and major ports in Europe, the West Indies, East Indies (the "China Trade"), South

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<sup>8</sup> Friedlander, "Historical Research," 7, 9-10.

<sup>9</sup> MHC, "Reconnaissance Survey," 10-11.

<sup>10</sup> Friedlander, "Historical Research," 11; MHC, "Reconnaissance Survey," 13.

<sup>11</sup> MHC, "Reconnaissance Survey," 13; C.W. Webber and W. S. Nevins, *Old Naumkeag: An Historical Sketch of The City of Salem, and the towns of Marblehead, Peabody, Beverly, Danvers, Wenham, Manchester, Topsfield, and Middleton* (Salem: A. A. Smith & Co, 1877), 236.

<sup>12</sup> Bryant F. Tolles, Jr. *Architecture in Salem: An Illustrated Guide* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1983), 51.



America, and Africa.<sup>13</sup> Salem's maritime trade in this period was dominated by several wealthy merchant families such as the Derbys, Grays, Crowninshields, and Forresters. Forty wharves lined Salem Harbor, with Derby Wharf, constructed shortly before the Revolution, in the center.<sup>14</sup> The new wealth generated by this economic success made Salem a cosmopolitan center of culture, with many churches and schools, a couple of newspapers, banks, insurance companies, libraries, charities, museums, and music groups. The first professional architect in the new United States, Samuel McIntire, built many ornate mansions for Salem's wealthiest citizens.<sup>15</sup> Merchant traders of the East India Marine Society gathered to share scientific knowledge starting in 1799 and put their collections of exotic objects on display at a newly-constructed hall—now part of the Peabody-Essex Museum—in the 1820s.<sup>16</sup>

This boom period was shaken by Thomas Jefferson's trade embargo of 1807 and by the War of 1812, both of which restricted American trade abroad. Salem remained an important maritime center through the 1820s and fishing, trade, and shipbuilding by no means disappeared from its waterfront in subsequent decades, but after 1830, the number of vessels entering Salem dropped dramatically, along with the duties collected on imports.<sup>17</sup> Derby Street's first period of decline had begun, and by the 1840s, one observer spoke of Salem as being a city "without a job."<sup>18</sup> Local entrepreneurs and civic leaders began to look elsewhere for a new source of prosperity: to the industrial development that was just beginning to take hold in New England.

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Booth, "Salem as Enterprise Zone, 1783-1786," in *Salem: Place, Myth, and Memory*, Morrison and Schultz, eds., 64; Webber and Nevins, *Old Naumkeag*, 236.

<sup>14</sup> Built by Capt. Richard Derby and his son, Elias Hasket Derby, Derby Wharf was begun between 1764-1771 and extended between 1806-08. Webber and Nevins, *Old Naumkeag*, 236; MHC, "Reconnaissance Survey," 17, 19-20; Booth, "Salem as Enterprise Zone," 64, 86-87; U.S. Department of the Interior, "The Salem Project: Study of Alternatives" (National Park Service, 1990), 132.

<sup>15</sup> Booth, "Salem as Enterprise Zone," 63, 70, 75; MHC, "Reconnaissance Survey," 17-18.

<sup>16</sup> McKenzie, Matthew G. 2004. "Salem as Athanaeum." In *Salem: Place, Myth, and Memory*. Dane Anthony Morrison, Nancy Lusignan Schultz, eds. (Boston: Northeastern University Press), 96.

<sup>17</sup> Friedlander, "Historical Research," 25; MHC, "Reconnaissance Survey," 19, 23.

<sup>18</sup> Clive Jarvis, *The Story of Pequot* (Salem: Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company, 1929), 28.

## Industrial Salem

The small existing industries in Salem, particularly its tanneries, provided a foundation for the city's shift into an industrial economy in the mid- to late nineteenth century. Many things were produced in Salem during its industrial heyday—carriages and wagons, typewriters and other machinery, cigars—but leather remained one of the most significant in Salem as in other North Shore communities. Like many places throughout the region, Salem also developed significant textile production, and these two sectors—leather and textiles—largely reinvented the waterfront area as manufacturing became more central to the local and regional economy.<sup>19</sup>

Nurtured by commercial shipping, Salem's lucrative leather and shoe industries began in the eighteenth century. Local tanners bought hides from shipmasters returning from their travels; Salem had four large tanneries by 1786. In the low land where the

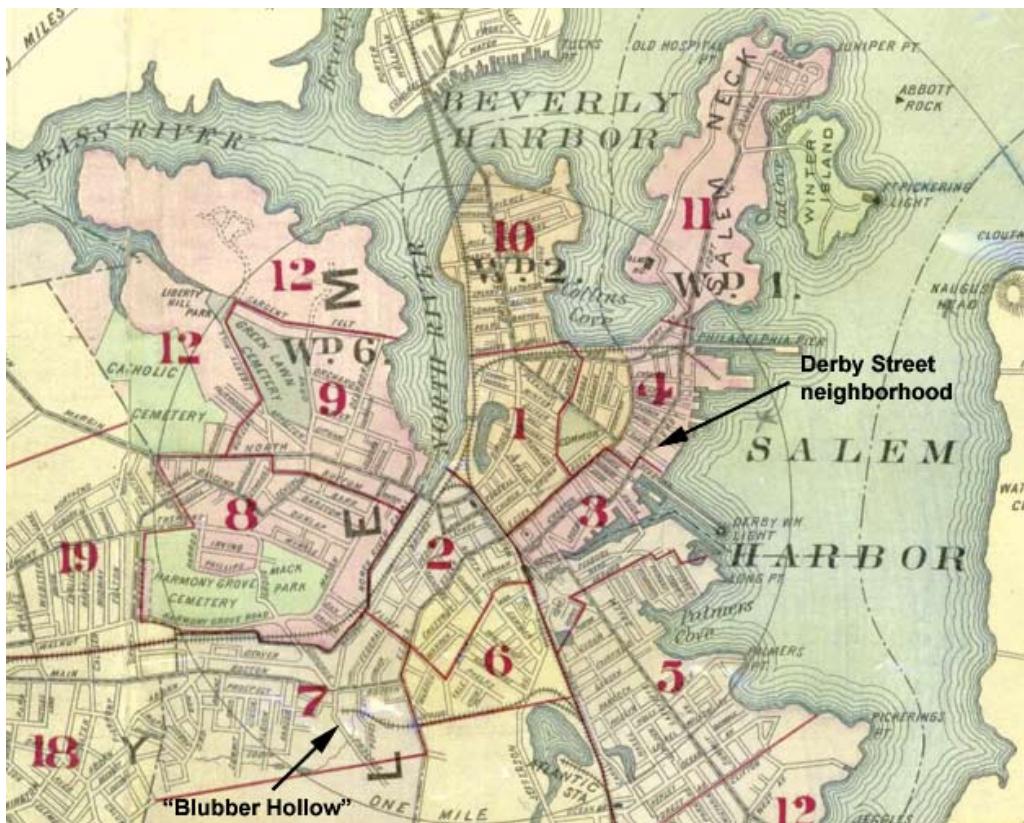


Figure 6 Detail of Salem in 1897, showing the Derby Street neighborhood as Wards 3 and 4 on the map. (Essex County Registry of Deeds)

<sup>19</sup> MHC, "Reconnaissance Survey," 33.

North River flowed from Peabody towards Beverly Harbor, tanners found plenty of bark and the water they needed for turning the hides into leather. This area became known as “Blubber Hollow,” referring to the blubbery smell of whale oil used by open-air pit tanneries in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (see Figure 5).<sup>20</sup> Salem manufacturers distributed their leather to businesses in the shoe and leather trades in other Essex County towns. In 1860, shoemaking led occupations in Essex County, and around 35% of tanners and curriers in Massachusetts were in the Salem and South Danvers area. Lynn became known for the manufacture of shoe machinery, and after it was established in 1905, United Shoe Machinery in Beverly became the main supplier of shoe machinery in the industry. New England’s largest leather and morocco factories were in Peabody, establishing the town as the center of the industry; Peabody also became known for the manufacture of sheepskins. In nearby Beverly, United Shoe operated one of the largest shoe factories in Massachusetts.<sup>21</sup> In 1865, 84 tanning and currying industries employed over 550 workers in Salem; 15 to 20 shoe factories employed almost 400 people. By 1905 there were 42 shoe factories in Salem, making it the city’s leading industry.<sup>22</sup>

Until the surge in Irish immigration around 1846, most of the leather workers were American-born men. Skilled leather workers from Ireland, particularly the tanning district around Cork, began arriving in the 1830s, taking up the trade in the Blubber Hollow shops; the area’s leather industry offered work to the increasing numbers of Irish immigrants arriving after 1846, and of course to the French Canadians and Eastern Europeans who came to Salem later in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>23</sup> Salem leather workers also found employment in nearby North Shore towns.

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<sup>20</sup> Robert P. Donnell, “Locational Response to Catastrophe: The Shoe and Leather Industry of Salem, Massachusetts, After the Conflagration of June 25, 1914” (Syracuse University Department of Geography Discussion Paper Series, No. 20, July 1976), 14 n. 11; John Flynn, *John Flynn and Sons, Inc. Salem, MA* (Privately printed, 1945?), 2-3; Friedlander, “Historical Research,” 11-13; Francis Lynch, *50 Years in Blubber Hollow With Salem Oil and Grease Co. Salem, MA* (no date), 13-15; MHC, “Reconnaissance Survey,” 16.

<sup>21</sup> *Salem, Beverly, Danvers and Peabody: Their Representative Businessmen and Points of Interest*, (New York: Mercantile Illustrating Company, 1893), 122, 87; *Hide and Leather: Peabody Supplement* (Chicago: Hide and Leather Pub. Co., 1905), n.p.

<sup>22</sup> MHC, “Reconnaissance Survey,” 26-27; “Salem Project,” 138, 140

<sup>23</sup> Dan Campbell, “The Industrial and Social Development of Boston Street, Salem,” unpublished paper by CETA Team Project, Historic Salem, Inc. (June 6, 1978), 7-8; Thomas Carroll, *History of the Leather Industry in Salem and Danvers, Mass. Supplement to Hide and Leather* (n.d.[1902]), 2.

Salem's leading leather merchants in the nineteenth century were a tight-knit group. Known in the trade as "the Senate," this group met informally, sometimes daily, for discussions of the trade, wage rates, and politics. Their informal but regular alliance proved useful in their resistance to the demands of striking laborers late in the nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup> Around 1885 the Knights of Labor began organizing among the Salem and Peabody leather workers. Founded in 1869 by a Philadelphia tailor, this group grew rapidly during the depression of the 1870s, and became a national organization promoting reforms such as cooperatives, homesteads, equal pay for both sexes, and the eight-hour work day. Tanners and curriers in Peabody and Salem organized to win a shorter working day in 1885-86. In July 1886 the local Knights of Labor presented demands for a 59 hour work week (a 10-hour day) to the large leather manufacturers of Salem and Peabody; they also protested low wages and management's refusal to negotiate with the union. In response to the strike, the leather manufacturers formed a "mutual protection" association to act together against the Knights' demand.<sup>25</sup>

The strike revealed the power of the industrialists' informal alliance, the Senate, for the owners were able to work together to shut down the strike. They hired non-union labor, which eventually broke the strike in November 1886, but not before a swath of violence occurred on both sides against non-union workers brought in by management, and against strike leaders such as George Warren, who was killed.<sup>26</sup> The local leather

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<sup>24</sup> Carroll, *History of the Leather Industry*, 2-3; Campbell, "Industrial and Social Development," 9.

<sup>25</sup> Campbell, "Industrial and Social Development," 11-12; "A Labor Crisis," *Salem Gazette*, (July 12, 1886) Labor Troubles, 1885-1886 Scrapbook of newspaper clippings, 9, Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum.

<sup>26</sup> "The Knights Surrender, Collapse of the Tannery Strike," *Boston Commercial Bulletin* (Dec. 4, 1886), Labor Troubles, 1885-1886, Scrapbook of newspaper clippings, 60-61, Phillips Library; Campbell, "Industrial and Social Development," 12-13; Aviva Chomsky, "Salem as a Global City, 1850-2004," in *Salem: Place, Myth, and Memory*, Morrison and Schultz, eds., 245 n. 48; Jim McAllister, "Salem Then and Now," in *Salem: Cornerstones of a Historic City*. David K. Goss, Richard Trask, Bryant Tolles, Jr., Joseph Flibbert, and Jim McAlister, eds. (Beverly, MA: Commonwealth Editions, 1999), 108.

The 1886 strike took place in a national context of widespread clashes between labor and management, frequently over the issue of the eight-hour day. The most visible and violent of these affairs took place in May 1886, following an encounter between strikers and police at the International Harvester plant in Chicago, where a striker was killed. The following night, a small anarchist group held a protest meeting in Chicago's Haymarket Square; when police arrived to break up the meeting a demonstrator threw a bomb, which resulted in the death of one policeman and several injuries. Ultimately, seven anarchists received death sentences as a result of the Haymarket incident, although there was no evidence linking them to the bomb. Tindall, George Brown, *America: A Narrative History*. V. 2. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), 803-4.

industry went into a decline following the 1886 strike, but new tanneries continued to open, often by the Irish and later, as we will see, by Poles as well.

Although leather was the dominant industry in nineteenth century Salem, the city was also a significant textile manufacturing center because of the presence of the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company. As elsewhere in New England, this company emerged from the desire of a group of maritime merchants—in this case retired shipmaster Nathaniel Griffin and a number of others—to invest their wealth so that it would produce a steady and profitable return. The textile industry was seen as a way to accomplish that, especially after a group of investors known as “the Boston Associates” developed an integrated system of textile manufacture that consolidated all the operations of producing cotton cloth under one roof.<sup>27</sup> Griffin and his partners founded the Naumkeag Company in 1839, and by 1845 they began building a plant at Stage Point on the South River opposite Derby Wharf.<sup>28</sup> Unlike other textile companies in the region, the Naumkeag was not powered by water, but by steam generated from burning coal, which arrived in Salem by sea. The company began production in 1847, conscious of local expectations that it would help to reverse the economic decline caused by the decrease in maritime trade.<sup>29</sup>

At first, the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company focused on a variety of cotton fabrics, but eventually specialized in producing a cotton sheeting known as Pequot. Employees tended to the various machines of textile production and processes—bale breaking, picking, carding, drawing, roving frames, spinning, spooling, warping frames, slashers, and of course the weaving looms. Management was especially proud of the weave shed. Here shuttles operated continuously, refilling automatically without pausing; the looms stopped immediately if a thread broke. The beauty of such automation meant that “one worker is able to operate a number of looms.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Robert Dalzell, *Enterprising Elite: The Boston Associates and the World They Made* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

<sup>28</sup> Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company Historic District Nomination Draft, section 8 p. 2; “Salem Project,” 34; Jarvis, *Story of Pequot*, 28.

<sup>29</sup> Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company Historic District Nomination Draft, section 8 p. 2; “Salem Project,” 34; Jarvis, *Story of Pequot*, 28.

<sup>30</sup> Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company, *The Pequot Story* (Salem: Naumkeag Steam Cotton Co., 1949), 11; Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company Historic District Nomination Draft, section 8, 2; Jarvis, *The Story of Pequot*, 7-21.

At the bleachery in Peabody cotton was stitched together to make continuous rolls of material about 18,000 feet long. This material was then put through several cycles of steaming, boiling, bleaching and washing, to make a very white sheeting product. More machines transformed this sheeting into a cylinder that was starched, ironed, and folded. The goods to be sold as piece goods were then measured, packaged and sealed. Fabric used to make finished sheets and pillowcases was finished by measuring to the correct length, and hemmed. NSCC named their Salem plant “Pequot Mills,” referring to their muslin and percale sheeting and finished sheets. By the late 1920s the company produced about 25,000 miles of sheeting a year in seven colors.<sup>31</sup>

The city in which Felix Soboczinski arrived in 1887, then, already boasted a considerable industrial base, which was continuing to expand. This industrial growth was fueling development in the downtown area just north of the harbor, with many large new commercial blocks being constructed along Washington and Essex Streets in the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>32</sup> The growth of industry was also spurring population growth. People of foreign birth—mostly Irish at that point—accounted for about a quarter of the city’s population in 1875, and almost a third by 1915, driving an overall population increase of more than 50% during that period.<sup>33</sup> By the time of Felix’s arrival, the city was also becoming much more ethnically and linguistically diverse. Like many New England towns and cities, it had begun to attract large numbers of French Canadians by the 1870s; by the early twentieth century, about a third of Salem’s residents traced their ancestry to Canada and the neighborhood that stretched south from the western end of Derby Street

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<sup>31</sup> Jarvis, *The Story of Pequot*, 23-24, 27, 8, 26; Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company Historic District Nomination Draft, section 8, 5.

<sup>32</sup> These included the Kinsman Block (1882), the Peabody Building (1891-2) and the Power Block (1889-90). MHC, “Reconnaissance Survey,” 31.

<sup>33</sup> Salem’s population was 24,117 in 1870, 37,200 in 1915, an increase of 54.2%. 24.7% were foreign-born (56% of these Irish) in 1875. By 1915 this had increased to 28.9% of the city’s population, with French Canadians the most numerous, Irish and Polish next in size, and significant numbers of Russian, Italians, Greeks and Turks. The actual number of foreign-born Salemites in 1875 was 6,420, which grew to 10,735 in 1915. MHC, “Reconnaissance Survey,” 30.

was heavily French Canadian.<sup>34</sup> The presence of these immigrants was adding a new layer of uses and associations to an already layered landscape, with industrial and ethnic structures and neighborhoods growing up within the landscape formerly dominated by maritime life and trade.

## From Poland to Salem

According to members of the Sobocinski family, there were only six Polish households in Salem when seventeen-year-old Felix Sobocinski disembarked on Derby Wharf in 1887.<sup>35</sup> To understand the beginnings of this local Polish community, it will be helpful to consider where Poles were coming from and why, and how Polish immigration to the U.S. in the late nineteenth century was shaped by the longer trajectory of Polish history.

Few Poles had found their way to colonial and early republican America. The Jamestown colony of the early seventeenth century included a handful of Polish craftsmen,<sup>36</sup> and the military heroes Tadeusz Kosciuszko and Kazimierz Pulaski laid the foundation for a sense of proud Polish connection and “surrogate roots” in the U.S. through their service during the American Revolution.<sup>37</sup> By the early nineteenth century, though, America was beginning to see small communities of Polish exiles who had left their homeland after a series of failed uprisings against the occupying powers who had partitioned what had once been a powerful Polish nation-state. As the century went on and Poles found themselves suffering politically, culturally, and economically under partition, this migration increased exponentially.

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<sup>34</sup> Precise population and employment figures were difficult to ascertain for Salem in this period. However, former SAMA historian John Frayler evidently undertook some detailed research in city birth documents for 1907, 1908, and 1910, which showed that approximately one third of Salem’s population in those years listed its nationality as Canadian, most likely French Canadian. (“Salem City Documents” in Frayler files) In 1900, the percentages of French Canadians employed in textile mills in other cities in the area was high: in Lowell, French Canadian males made up 41% of all males in city’s textile labor force, females 81%, and the figures are comparable for other textile cities. Gerard J. Brault, *The French-Canadian Heritage in New England* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1986), 61.

<sup>35</sup> Walczak, “Under the Shadow of Nathaniel Hawthorne,” p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Pula, *Polish Americans*, 2.

<sup>37</sup> Joseph Wiczerzak, “Pre- and Proto-Ethnics: Poles in the United States Before the Immigration ‘After Bread’,” *Polish Review* 21:3 (1976), 12.

The region that became Poland is at the intersection between eastern and western Europe and between the Baltic Sea to the north and the Mediterranean to the south. This location has shaped its history in fundamental ways. At times it has produced a cosmopolitan flowering of cultural, spiritual, and political ideas drawing on widespread influences, as well as a vigorous role in European trade. At many other times, it has meant that this region has been fought over and invaded by competing powers from all sides. Poland has been heavily Roman Catholic for many centuries, with the Polish nation's origin generally dated to the conversion of the powerful duke Mieszko to Latin Christianity in 966. Among the models of kingship and aristocracy that emerged across Europe in the Middle Ages, Poland developed one that was unusually participatory, for the period. The authority of kings was checked and challenged in many ways by clerics and by the large and small land-holders (*szlachta*) who made up a sizeable nobility, creating a political tradition that later nationalists often drew on.<sup>38</sup> The region incorporated many ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups, including German speakers from the west and south, Czechs from the south, Russian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and Belarusian peoples from the east, and many Jews.

Military conflict with its neighbors has been almost a constant throughout Poland's history. Germanic powers were the main threat to Polish autonomy from the west, while Russia has long been the major power to the east. During the sixteenth century, Poland allied itself with Lithuania to create an extensive commonwealth that was an important power in Europe for most of a century. This was a "golden age" for Poland that later nationalists looked back on with nostalgia and hope. But as neighboring Russia, Prussia, and Austria grew more powerful, the commonwealth became more vulnerable to its neighbors' ambitions. Russia and Prussia joined to carve off about a third of the commonwealth's territory in 1772 in what would become known as the First Partition.<sup>39</sup>

In a backlash against this seizure of lands, Poles became much more self-consciously nationalistic and their leaders and nobility more unified around the idea of defending the Polish people or nation. This nationalism found perhaps its fullest expression in the Constitution that the Polish parliament (or *sejm*) enacted in 1791; May 3, or Constitution Day, remained a date of patriotic celebration for many years well

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<sup>38</sup> Jerzy, Lukowski and Hubert Zawadski, *A Concise History of Poland* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 9-11, 61.

<sup>39</sup> Lukowski and Zawadski, *Concise History*, 122.



into the twentieth century in Poland and its diaspora communities alike. However, the constitution was in force for only a year before Russia decided it was time to snuff out this assertion of independence, invading in 1792 and enforcing a second partition in 1793 which left a small Polish state of about 4 million people in a territory already largely occupied by Russia. The next year, Austria joined Russia and Prussia in carving up what remained of quasi-sovereign Poland in a third partition.<sup>40</sup> As Lukowski and Zawadski note, “The experiment in noble-democracy was over, a resounding failure. What lived on was the resentment of a noble-nation which, despite being torn apart, still felt itself a coherent unity and which, in its final years, had experienced a new pride in cultural and political resurrection.”<sup>41</sup>

In Salem, as elsewhere in America, the arrival of Polish immigrants reflected the specific times, places, and conditions under which Poland had been partitioned and many of its people driven to seek new lives elsewhere. Salem’s first known Polish resident was an exile from an uprising in November of 1830, one that saw large numbers of young patriots fleeing the country after Russia defeated the rebellion.<sup>42</sup> Edward Baltasar Bohuszewicz (1810-1848) was a pianist who lived in the city briefly in the late 1830s. He taught music and was also a composer, penning waltzes and mazurkas with patriotic titles like “The Polish Pilgrim” and “The Memory of the Polish Exiles.”<sup>43</sup> While in Salem, he lived in a two-story brick building at 247 Essex Street (later demolished), but by 1838, he had moved to Providence, Rhode Island, where he worked as an organist at the Unitarian Church until his death.<sup>44</sup> (Bohuszewicz’s life is a striking parallel to Poland’s great musical hero of this period, Frederic Chopin, who was born in the same year, also lived in exile after 1830 and also died young, in 1849.)

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<sup>40</sup> Lukowski and Zawadski, *Concise History*, 128, 131.

<sup>41</sup> Lukowski and Zawadski, *Concise History*, 132.

<sup>42</sup> Carberg, “Rediscovering Salem Polonia.”

<sup>43</sup> Stanislaus A. Blejwas, “‘To Sing Out the Future of Our Beloved Fatherland’: Choral Nationalism and The Polish Singers Alliance of America, 1889-1939,” *Journal of Ethnic History* 19:1 (Fall 1999), n.p.

<sup>44</sup> Edward Carberg, “Rediscovering Salem Polonia.”



Figure 7 The three partitioned areas of Poland in 1795. (Map by Halibutt, accessed on July 1, 2009 at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Rzeczpospolita\\_Rozbiory\\_3.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Rzeczpospolita_Rozbiory_3.png))

The city's first long-term resident of Polish background was actually born in New York City in 1834, but that date makes it seem probable that he may have been the child of someone in the earlier exile populations, perhaps from the 1830 Uprising. Edmund A. Yasinski arrived in Salem in 1858 and lived at 55 Derby Street for a time, later building himself a house at 8 Forrester Street. He joined the local militia unit, the Salem Cadets, serving with them during the Civil War.<sup>45</sup> After the war, he operated a tobacco shop on Central Street and was known to have assisted the few other Poles who came in the middle part of the century.<sup>46</sup> As was the case with many of the early Polish Americans, Yasinski was Protestant, not Catholic; his funeral was conducted from the First

<sup>45</sup> Elizabeth Borkowski, "One Hundred Fifteen Years in Salem." In "Graduate Immigration Seminar: A Bicentennial Study. Immigration in American Life: Graduate Seminar Research Papers on North Shore Selected Topics," Vol. 1. Adele Younis, ed. (Salem State College 1974), 24; Carberg, "Rediscovering Salem Polonia."

<sup>46</sup> Borkowski, "One Hundred Fifteen Years," 24.

Universalist Church on Rust Street, and the name of his widow—Mary Clarke Yasinski—suggests that he had married a “Yankee” rather than a fellow Pole.<sup>47</sup>

By the 1850s, a larger group of Polish immigrants was beginning to arrive in the U.S.<sup>48</sup> It was this phase of migration that Felix Soboczinski and his family were later a part of. Although many nineteenth-century Poles felt a collective sense of being part of a nation struggling to regain an independent state, the realities of life in the partitioned areas reinforced ethnic, regional, linguistic, and economic differences among the western, eastern, and southern areas of what had been Poland.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, one historian has contended that, “The history of nineteenth-century rural Poland is not a single history at all, but three distinct histories.”<sup>50</sup> The Prussian- and German-controlled regions from which the Sobocinskis came included the western and northern parts of the former Polish state. This region was more heavily industrialized than the other two partitions and offered more economic and educational opportunities to Poles living there. Many were artisans, craftsmen, and entrepreneurs who gained experience working in retail businesses, mines, foundries, and factories. But this relative openness came at the cost of a campaign of “germanification” that sought to suppress or erase Polish language, religion, and culture. After Germany was unified as a single state in 1871, this campaign intensified into what became known as the *Kulturkampf* (cultural wars). Poles actively resisted these attempts to make them more German, and their backlash against the *Kulturkampf* helped to solidify their own sense of being ethnically, spiritually, and nationally different from their political rulers.<sup>51</sup>

The U.S., with its great need for industrial labor, was a particularly appealing destination for these and later Polish immigrants. Perhaps as many as three quarters of all Poles who left Europe choose the U.S. as their destination.<sup>52</sup> Those who emigrated

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<sup>47</sup> Carberg, “Rediscovering Salem Polonia.”

<sup>48</sup> Lukowski and Zawadski, *Concise History*, 191; Pula, *Polish Americans*, 15.

<sup>49</sup> Lukowski and Zawadski, *Concise History*, 135-36.

<sup>50</sup> John J. Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me: A History of the Polish-Americans* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 6.

<sup>51</sup> John Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross: A History of the Polish Roman Catholic Union in America, 1873-2000*. (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 2003), 147-48.

<sup>52</sup> Pula, *Polish Americans*, 17, 19.

to the U.S.—150,000 people in the 1870s alone—tended to be “young, energetic, and optimistic,” as well as highly nationalistic.<sup>53</sup> Many were the younger sons of land-owning families who were unlikely to inherit enough land to live on or who were trying to help their families hold onto the property that they had.<sup>54</sup> Others saw their migration as temporary, an extension of the search for work elsewhere in Europe in order to earn money to send back to their families.<sup>55</sup>

The Sobocinski family appears to have had permanent resettlement in mind from the outset. The Sobocinskis lived in Pomorze (Pomerania), which became a part of Prussia during the First Partition in 1772.<sup>56</sup> By the time Joseph Sobocinski decided it was time for the family to move to America, then, his home region had been under German rule for more than a century. According to his granddaughter, Wanda Walczak, “Grandfather Sobocinski wearied of the strict rule imposed on native Poles by the German masters [and] was determined that his six sons and two daughters should have more opportunity to live as they saw fit.”<sup>57</sup> It required a certain level of prosperity in order to contemplate buying a passage to America for even one family member; even among later migrants from Galicia, the most impoverished area of Poland, those who came were not the poorest of the poor. Joseph Soboczinski’s artisan status as a forester, along with his sons’ training in various artisanal skills, would have enabled the family to

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<sup>53</sup> Pula, *Polish Americans*, 15.

<sup>54</sup> Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 17; Victor Greene, *For God and Country: The Rise of Polish and Lithuanian Ethnic Consciousness in America, 1860-1910* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Madison, 1975), 19-10.

<sup>55</sup> Figures for various periods show that about one-third eventually returned home (Daniels, *Coming to America*, 215; Helena Znaniecka Lopata, *Polish Americans* [New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994], 28). Immigrants’ plans often changed over time; in her 1974 study of Salem’s Poles, Elizabeth Borkowski spoke with a Mr. Swiderski who said his father had belonged to a landed family in Poland and had emigrated when he lost his share of the family estate. He planned to earn some money and then return to his wife and five children, but his planned venture in Poland no longer seemed viable when he returned after five years, so he went back to the U.S. and eventually was able to send for his family (Borkowski, “One Hundred Fifteen Years,” 12-13).

<sup>56</sup> Prussia was one of many German kingdoms, and a dominant player in the German state that united in 1871 and the empire that flourished up to the time of the First World War. This report generally uses “Germany” to refer to the post-1871 state.

<sup>57</sup> Walczak, “In the Shadow of Nathaniel Hawthorne,” p. 1.

contemplate pulling up stakes and relocating to America. In sending seventeen-year-old Felix on his own, they were following the common pattern of sending a younger son first to establish a base and start to earn some money to fund the passages for the others.

When Felix arrived in Salem in 1887, he found only a handful of Poles already there.<sup>58</sup> One was a man known as Joseph Brown—presumably an Anglicized version of his Polish name. Brown was a 34-year-old carpenter and painter from Warsaw who was listed in 1874 as living at 23 Tucker's Wharf (later Grant Street and still later—and presently—Kosciusko Street), close to Derby Wharf in the heart of the Derby Street neighborhood.<sup>59</sup> Like many Poles from urban centers, Brown was an artisan: among his skills was the making of “flying horses” for carousels. In his later life, he lived in the Salem Willows, the peninsula to the east of Derby Street; he died in Salem in 1914.

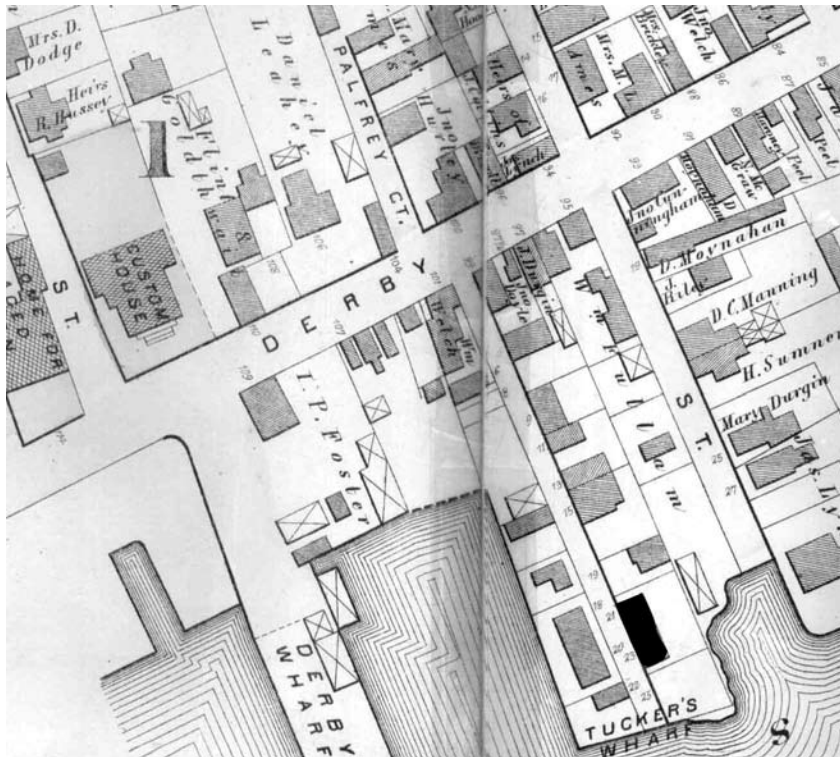


Figure 8 Tucker's Wharf in 1874, showing house at #23, occupied by Joseph Brown that year (dark rectangle). (Essex County Registry of Deeds)

<sup>58</sup> It is not known in which partition the Kulakowski family originated.

<sup>59</sup> Information about Joseph Brown is from Carberg, “Rediscovering Salem Polonia.”

The first of Salem's migrant Poles reported to have become an American citizen was Francis (Frank) Malinowski, who came around 1880. He lived at 22 Becket Street, on the eastern side of the Derby Street neighborhood, and later on Sutton Avenue and Hodges Court.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps reflecting the shift just beginning in migration patterns, Malinowski apparently came from Austria, probably the Austrian partition of the former Poland. In the 1881 Salem City Directory, he was listed as a carpenter for the Eastern Railroad; later he was employed by his fellow Pole Joseph Brown as a painter and worked on the "flying horses." Malinowski assisted Albert Smerczynski, who also worked as a painter, to come to Salem in 1883, and married Smerczynski's daughter Eleanor.<sup>61</sup> Malinowski died on Nov. 10, 1911; he was then living at 5 Turner Street. In the three decades between his arrival and the time of his death, Malinowski would have seen many changes in the neighborhood, which by 1911 had become quite heavily Eastern European, particularly Polish. Carberg lists the Malinowski and Smerczynski families as two of the four "founding families" of Salem's Polish community, the other two being the Sobocinskis and Dombrowskis.<sup>62</sup>

The city in which Felix Sobocinski arrived in May 1887, then, was one where earlier nineteenth-century immigrants from Ireland and later ones from French Canada were numerous but where Eastern Europeans were still quite unusual and where the few Polish residents seem to have readily offered assistance to newer arrivals. Wanda Walczak reports that young Felix found the Kulakowski family to be "very friendly and concerned about him," to the extent that they helped him to learn English and took him in as a boarder.<sup>63</sup> He quickly found a job—in his later recollection, "the easiest job I ever had!"<sup>64</sup>—in a cotton mill, probably the Naumkeag factory on Salem's waterfront. According to Walczak's written history, he worked 12-hour days, six days a week, for a

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<sup>60</sup> Borkowski, "One Hundred Fifteen Years," 24; Carberg, "Rediscovering Salem Polonia."

<sup>61</sup> Carberg, "Rediscovering Salem Polonia." According to Carberg, Albert Smerczynski is first listed in 1888-89 in the Salem Directory as a painter at 6 White St. Two years later he appears as a laborer living on English St.

<sup>62</sup> Carberg, "Rediscovering Salem Polonia."

<sup>63</sup> Walczak, "Under the Shadow of Nathaniel Hawthorne," p. 1.

<sup>64</sup> "The Happiest Family in All the World," *The Shoreline*, Newmarket, New Hampshire, no date [probably 1952], in Sobocinski family records.

salary of \$3.10 a week, and in a year and half he had saved enough to send money home for another passage to the U.S. The second family member to make the trip was Felix's brother Frank/Franciszek. The two young men followed a common pattern of gradually sending for their relatives to join them, and by the end of the century<sup>65</sup> the extended family—the parents, Joseph and Katherine, plus Felix and Frank's four brothers, two sisters, the spouses of two of the siblings and five young children—had all come to Salem.

Both Felix and Frank appear to have been highly entrepreneurial, a trait they shared with others in their family. Felix apparently opened his own grocery/butcher business in Salem within two years of arriving, and later moved to Newmarket, New Hampshire, near the New Hampshire coast, to open a restaurant and grocery store called Sobocinski's ("Soby's," to local people).<sup>66</sup> Frank eventually moved west, and became a successful building contractor in Cleveland, Ohio.<sup>67</sup> According to a c.1952 newspaper article about Felix, he met his wife, a native of the same part of German Poland where he was born, when her ship docked near where he was living (presumably in Portsmouth, New Hampshire) and she discovered that her luggage had gone missing. "With a little detecting and the aid of American friends he had made," the newspaper reported, "Felix was able to find the thief who had stolen the luggage and restore it to his newly found friend," who later became his wife.<sup>68</sup>

Although Felix seems to have moved away from Salem quite quickly, most of the Sobocinski family remained and many of them became important community leaders as the Polish population grew and settled into the city. Before he moved west, Frank and a number of his brothers took active roles in the founding and development of the St. Joseph Polish Roman Catholic Society, discussed in the following section. Walenty and Bronislaus Sobocinski appear along with Frank as members in 1899; the following year, Frank is recorded as having donated \$10 (a considerable amount at that time)

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<sup>65</sup> See note 1 above about the discrepancies in written material about the family's arrival dates.

<sup>66</sup> Salem had its own "Soby's," a shop that was located for many years on Webb Street at the eastern end of the Derby Street neighborhood. The Sobocinski family ran many small businesses in the area, and it was not clear from sources consulted for this study which family members established which of the businesses where and when.

<sup>67</sup> "Happiest Family."

<sup>68</sup> "Happiest Family."

toward the purchase of a cope, or robe, for the priest who was visiting Salem to hear Confession. Wladyslaw, one of the older Sobocinski brothers, became particularly active in many organizations in Salem, including the St. Joseph Society. Like many of his fellow immigrants from the German partition, Wladyslaw can be categorized as an artisan; he was trained as a blacksmith before serving in the German heavy cavalry. In the Salem area, he worked as a blacksmith in Marblehead for six years, and later spent 18 years working for the United Shoe Machinery Company in Beverly, retiring in 1926.<sup>69</sup> In addition to his involvement with the St. Joseph Society, he was also active in the Polish American Citizens Club (including serving as its treasurer) and Polish-American Moose Club. His wife, Franciszka, was equally involved in community organizations; she was president of the women's sodality (or lay religious society) at St. John the Baptist Church and a founding member of the Women's Polish-American Citizens Club. The couple's history illustrates the pattern of older family members following in the wake of younger brothers who had established a base in the U.S. Both Wladyslaw and Franciszka were already in their thirties and the parents of a young and growing family (they eventually had nine children) when they came to Salem. Their oldest son, Jan (John), was fourteen in 1899; the youngest son was still an infant, and others were born in Salem.

As with most migrant communities, Poles in America quickly built formal and informal networks of mutual support in many areas of their lives. Two important strategies, common in most migrant communities, were to establish familiar religious organizations and to build formal and informal networks of mutual support. In the case of Salem, it was a mutual assistance organization—the St. Joseph Society—that came first, laying some of the groundwork for the establishment of many kinds of religious, economic, political, social, and cultural projects over the next several decades. Members of the Sobocinski family were integrally involved in the founding of the St. Joseph Society, to whose founding we will now turn.

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<sup>69</sup> Detailed information about Wladyslaw Sobocinski is from his granddaughters, Dorothy Filip and Joan Pizzello, and from Sobocinski family records and an undated clipping from an unknown Salem newspaper, "Daniels Street Couple Observing Their 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary."



## The St. Joseph Society and Salem's First Polish Generation

The longer the Polish immigrants resided in Salem, the more they become aware of the need to work better together. They wanted to create a forum where all matters concerning Polish affairs could be discussed. To serve this purpose, following an example of other Polish population centers, it was decided to form a Society. Thanks to the efforts of several prominent individuals, in the year 1897 a Society of Saint Joseph was established.

So reads part of the introduction in the handwritten record book that is now part of the Salem Maritime NHS archive of materials relating to St. Joseph Hall. As already noted in the discussion of sources in Chapter One, the book was probably penned by Teofil Bartnicki, longtime member and onetime president of the St. Joseph Society, and it appears to be his transcription of earlier record books, with occasional annotations.

In founding the St. Joseph Society, Polish leaders in Salem were not only following a pattern established in other Polish immigrant communities, but in America as a whole at that time. The tradition of mutual assistance organizations in America dates back to the early eighteenth century, and draws from such antecedents as the Masonic Order and the British “friendly society.” The first large American national life insurance order (the Ancient Order of United Workmen) was founded in 1868, and the practice grew quickly, with at least 1.3 million members enrolled in fraternal life insurance societies by 1890 and 13 million—perhaps a third of all adult males—in societies of various types by 1910.<sup>70</sup> Urbanization, the loss of longstanding rural networks of support and association, and the uncertainties of the industrial capitalist economy and labor led many people—but particularly those in poorer or more marginalized groups, such as immigrants and African-Americans—to seek security from their peers.<sup>71</sup>

In his 2000 study of mutual aid societies and fraternal orders, David Beito notes that these organizations were characterized by their systems of autonomous, democratically-governed local lodges, their highly ritualized practices, and their provision of various benefits to their members, often life insurance, sick benefits, and funeral benefits.<sup>72</sup> Most of these societies also promoted certain social values, usually middle

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<sup>70</sup> David T. Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State: Fraternal Societies and Social Services, 1890-1967* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 12-14.

<sup>71</sup> Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 19.

<sup>72</sup> Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State*, 1.

class ones. They not only acted as a social safety net but also offered a setting in which old and new community leaders could hone their leadership skills, create social and political networks, and demonstrate their trustworthiness. As John Bukowczyk notes, “Success went to society organizers who kept their word.”<sup>73</sup>

For obvious reasons, the mutual assistance model had great appeal in many immigrant communities; immigrants had founded about 7,000 mutual aid and fraternal organizations by 1910.<sup>74</sup> Ethnic communities often felt that it was shameful to accept help from outside their own groups; one early study of Poles in the U.S. found that Polish immigrants saw the acceptance of American charity as a disgrace to the entire community.<sup>75</sup> Many Poles were also already quite familiar with the principle of mutual assistance, particularly those from the German and Austrian partitions, where grass-roots and professional efforts to maintain Polish culture had often taken the form of land banks, village cooperatives, building and loan societies, and similar structures.<sup>76</sup> The first Polish-American mutual aid society was the St. Stanislaus Society, founded in Chicago in 1864;<sup>77</sup> by 1910, about 800,000 Poles—around three-quarters of those then in the U.S.—belonged to at least one such society.<sup>78</sup> Beito notes that immigrants from Eastern Europe had a reputation of being “joiners” more than some other ethnic groups.<sup>79</sup>

Franciszek (Frank) Sobocinski was among the seven men who came together in 1897 to try to start a local mutual assistance society. The others, according to the handwritten minutes in the St. Joseph Society record book, were:

A.S. Kotarski	Marcin Witos
Franciszek Luziński	Józef Kowalski
Józef Laskowski	Władysław Jastrzebski

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<sup>73</sup> Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 38.

<sup>74</sup> Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 39.

<sup>75</sup> Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State*, 26.

<sup>76</sup> Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 38; Greene, *For God and Country*, 39.

<sup>77</sup> Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 38.

<sup>78</sup> Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 39.

<sup>79</sup> Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State*, 23.

Alexander S. Kotarski was from Warsaw, which was in the Russian-dominated part of Poland. In a Salem newspaper article a little over a decade later, Kotarski was referred to as the recognized head of the Polish community.<sup>80</sup> With his French Canadian wife, Clara, he came to own considerable property along Derby Street, including a four-story block at 167-169 Derby Street, across from what would become the location of St. Joseph Hall. It seems reasonable to surmise that some or all of the other five would-be founders of the Society in 1897 also came from the German-occupied parts of Poland—the cohort of immigrants that often tended to form a leadership cadre as U.S. Polish communities began to expand around the turn of the century.

However, in Salem as in other places, the somewhat elevated status of these relatively more educated, prosperous, and urbanized Poles did not win automatic respect from the more numerous rural Galicians from the Austrian partition who were beginning to arrive by the 1880s.<sup>81</sup> The St. Joseph Society's record book notes the apparent regional differences and perhaps friction that arose with this first attempt to organize the Society: "Through the first few years the Society was dominated by members who came from central and eastern parts of Poland. They failed to bring in wider membership and the meetings of the Society were suspended until 1899."

In 1899, a second attempt was made. This time, the leaders apparently represented a wider slice of Salem's growing Polish population. The organizers of the March 5 community-wide meeting to reconstitute the St. Joseph Society were Konstanty Wolan and Wladyslaw Gonet. Alexander Kotarski spoke about the goals of the society, and members of the Sobocinski family and other established community leaders were among the thirty men who signed up at the meeting. Franciszek Sobocinski was elected as the society's first president, and his brothers Wladyslaw and Bronislaw joined as members. However, given the rapid growth of the society from its 1899 rebirth, it seems clear that the organization was now incorporating many of the newer immigrants from the Austrian and perhaps the Russian partitions, even while German-area Poles continued to take prominent roles.

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<sup>80</sup> "Remarkable Progress of Poles in Salem," Salem Evening News, n.d. [1911?]. Found in House of Seven Gables scrapbook, "News Clippings 1910-1916."

<sup>81</sup> Lopata, *Polish Americans*, 10; Eugene Obidinski and Helen Stankiewicz Zand, *Polish Folkways in America: Community and Family* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), 30.

The early meetings were held in members' homes or in rented halls. In November 1900, the record book notes, "Because of the small turn out and the expense of renting the Hall, the November meeting was held at the apartment of the secretary M. Witkos," while some of the other early meetings took place at the home of Jan Gross at 58 Union Street, just south of Derby Street. It appears that this Derby-Union corner became the regular venue for the Society's meetings in the ten years before the group built its own hall. Maps from the turn of the century clearly show the layered presence of different ethnic groups in this part of the city. In 1897, 58 Union Street was owned by J. Coffey (see Figure 9), and other Irish names in the immediate area of the map are joined by French Canadian names like Foran and Marchand, reflecting the fact that this western end of the Derby Street area around the Naumkeag factory overlapped with the French Canadian neighborhood in "the Point." In September of 1902, it was decided to rent a hall owned by someone who was perhaps Irish,<sup>82</sup> and to sub-let this space for weddings as an income-producer for the Society. A picture of St. Joseph and a billiard table were installed, although playing for money was not allowed. This location seems to have been far from ideal, and the minutes reflect tensions with the neighbors over noise from social events at the hall, as well as concerns about the price of the rent. As will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, the Society purchased its own building at 160 Derby Street in 1907, but that existing building appears to have been too small for its activities, and while it was constructing a new hall, meetings were held at various locations in the neighborhood—Pulaski Hall, Lafayette Hall,<sup>83</sup> the basement of the newly-built Polish Church on Herbert Street. In 1908 and 1909, the group returned to its original corner, renting space in what was then "Robaczewski Hall," the same building on the corner of Derby and Union Streets, which was now owned by Society member Piotr (Peter) Robaczewski.

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<sup>82</sup> The minutes note this was "Cassey" or "Carsey"—the spelling is unclear. On the 1897 street map, the owner is listed as W.W. Kelman.

<sup>83</sup> Locations of these two halls are not known. It is possible that one of these names may have been applied to the building at 160 Derby Street which the Society purchased in 1906 and then tore down to make way for its new hall in 1909.

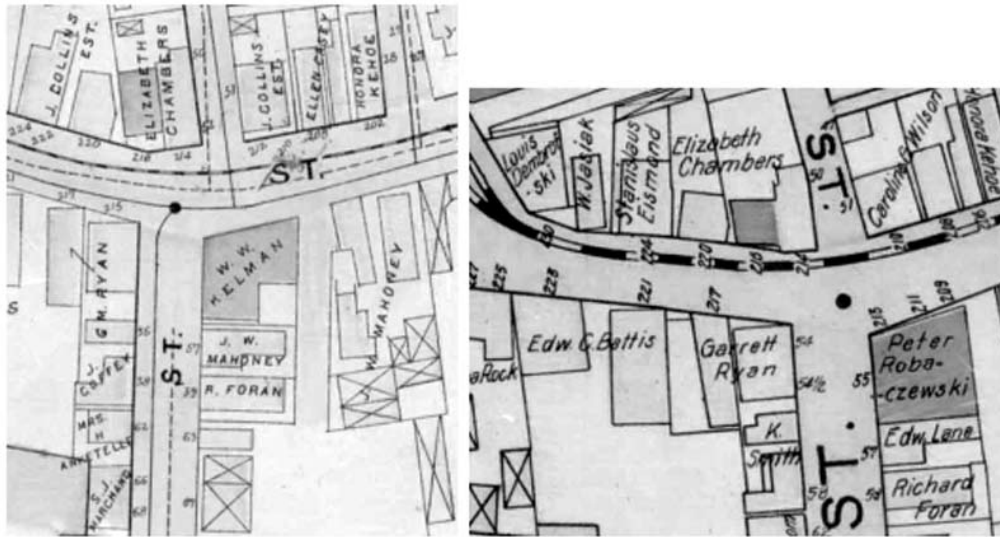


Figure 9 Intersection of Derby and Union streets in 1897 (left) and 1911 (left). Derby Street runs east and west, Union Street north and south. (Essex County Registry of Deeds)

At the second meeting of the reconvened St. Joseph Society, Herman Tyburc was among the new members who joined. He rose quickly into its leadership, becoming Cashier in 1900, Vice President in 1901, and President in 1903. Tyburc's background illustrates the regional, ethnic, linguistic, and national complexities of identity in the first generation of Polish settlement in the U.S.<sup>84</sup> Born in 1865, he came to the U.S. from Galicia in 1886, in the early stages of the mass migration from the Austrian-controlled part of Poland. Poles in this region, which centered around Krakow, were often very poor but also the most culturally cohesive among the three partitions.<sup>85</sup> Many of the Poles who came to the U.S. originated in this area, and the political and cultural strategies developed in Galicia strongly influenced community organizing here. Although these immigrants often did identify themselves with the Polish nation, their group and cultural identities tended to be more local than national. Herman's grandson, Frank, recalls that "it was always said that he was one of the Gorals," a highland people from the Carpathian mountains in south-eastern Poland, northern Slovakia, and the eastern part of the Czech Republic. However, Herman also spoke German, and his German name suggests that he, like many people from the region, may have been of mixed ethnic and linguistic background.

<sup>84</sup> Information about Herman Tyburc is drawn from an interview with his grandson and from the records of the St. Joseph Society.

<sup>85</sup> Cygan, "Inventing Polonia," 216; Lukowski and Zawadzki, *Concise History*, 193.

Poles in Galicia also did not have to contend with the kinds of “germanification” or “russification” campaigns that took place in the other occupied regions, and so they had less reason to have to define themselves in opposition to direct attempts to undermine their culture. Because the Austrian empire had a somewhat weaker grip on its occupied territories, it had to rely on local elites like the priests and *szlachta* for leadership, which meant that local leaders were more likely to be Polish than Austrian. Many of these Polish leaders favored accommodation over confrontation and focused on creating local spaces based in the parish and the home where Polish culture could maintain itself, rather than on political or military struggle for an independent nation-state as had been the more common pattern in the nineteenth century.<sup>86</sup> Polish language education and public celebration of patriotic holidays were widespread in Galicia, reflecting a belief that cultivation of Polish culture at a grass-roots, parish level was the best way to build up the national body.<sup>87</sup> Farther left on the political spectrum, radical leaders from other regions also found a home in Galicia, creating a socialist movement that existed alongside the more dominant conservative leadership and to some extent shared the emphasis on grass-roots cultural organizing and popular education. The conservatives’ combination of cultural activity and political accommodation migrated with late nineteenth and early twentieth century immigrants to the U.S. and shaped the policies of many Polish American organizations, most notably the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America, of which Salem’s St. Joseph Society was a member.<sup>88</sup>

However, this political and cultural flowering was limited by Galicia’s extreme poverty. “Galician misery” was a byword in the late nineteenth century.<sup>89</sup> Because property ownership was such an important sign of a family’s social status, peasants tended to cling to their farms even as the land was divided into smaller and less viable portions with each succeeding generation.<sup>90</sup> The region experienced famines and agricultural blight in the mid-nineteenth century, while the growth of commercial

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<sup>86</sup> Cygan, “Inventing Polonia,” 211-12.

<sup>87</sup> Lukowski and Zawadski, *Concise History*, 193; Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 89.

<sup>88</sup> Lukowski and Zawadski, *Concise History*, 185-86, 212.

<sup>89</sup> Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 8.

<sup>90</sup> Pula, *Polish Americans*, 17.

agriculture pushed many small farmers off their land and industry failed to develop to the extent that it did in the other partitions. Alcoholism and illiteracy were widespread. With large families, dwindling access to land, and limited numbers of industrial jobs, many rural Poles chose migration—either within Europe or beyond it—as a way to support themselves and their families.<sup>91</sup>

Herman Tyburc, then, represented a different regional experience among Polish immigrants. Like the members of the Sobocinski family, though, he was obviously highly entrepreneurial, and established himself in business quite quickly. The contentious tannery strike in Salem and Peabody that took place in the year of his arrival had marked the beginning of a decline in the area's leather industry overall, but it also appears to have created some opportunities for the establishment of smaller-scale shoe and leather factories, many of them owned by Irish and other immigrants.<sup>92</sup> Tyburc came to own at least two companies, including one called Tyburc Shoes. As he became more prosperous, he bought considerable real estate, eventually owning houses in Salem and the surrounding towns (see Figure 10). He himself lived in various locations over time, including the 1836 Cox House at 110 (later 174) Derby Street and 10 Mall Street, in the wealthy district north of Salem Common. In 1907 he purchased the Hawkes House, a late eighteenth-century wood frame building facing the Custom House, along with several other buildings on Custom House Court.<sup>93</sup> These buildings, like others owned by Tyburc, were converted into apartments and rented, mostly to other immigrants from Eastern Europe.

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<sup>91</sup> Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 8-11; Lukowski and Zawadzki, *Concise History*, 68-69, 88.

<sup>92</sup> Campbell, "Industrial and Social Development," 15-16; McAllister, "Salem Then and Now," 111.

<sup>93</sup> Friedlander, "Historical Research," 110-11; Tolles, *Architecture in Salem*, 59-60.

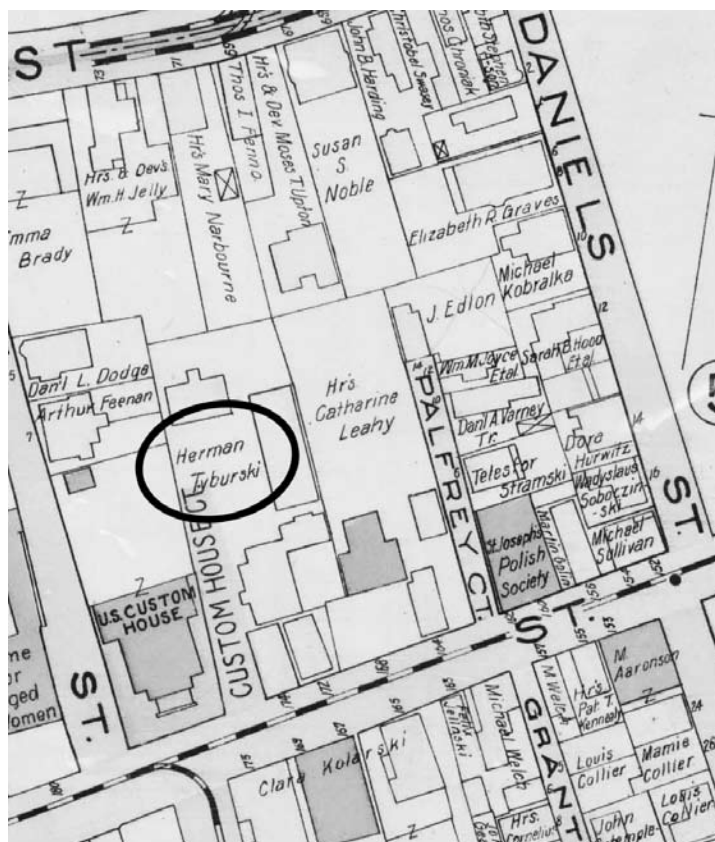


Figure 10 This detail from the 1911 Salem map shows much of the Custom House Court property being owned by "Herman Tyburski" (Herman Tyburc). Derby Street runs east/west along the bottom of the image. (Essex County Registry of Deeds)



Figure 11 Herman Tyburec in regalia of St. Joseph Polish Roman Catholic Society, from Salem Evening News, April 7, 1949, "Four Charter Members of Society Alive." (Photo reprinted courtesy of The Salem News)



Tyburc married a woman of Czech or Slovak background, Marianne Harkabus, and they had five children. He seems to have wanted to demonstrate his tremendous success to those in his former home, because between the world wars, during the period of Poland's independence, he returned for a visit, taking his own car with him for a motor tour of Europe. The society page of a Salem newspaper took note of this extravagant trip, reporting that except for a minor accident 175 miles from Berlin, the visit had been without mishap.<sup>94</sup>

When the St. Joseph Society was reconstituted in March 1899, then, its membership seemed to include a broader representation of immigrants from the various regions of Poland. Rural and urban, artisans and farmers, *szlachta* and peasants, educated and unlettered, raised under German, Austrian, or Russian rule, speaking a multiplicity of languages and regional or ethnic dialects<sup>95</sup>—many strands of cultural identity were present in the gatherings of people who were beginning to shape some sort of collective community in the Derby Street neighborhood at the end of the nineteenth century, including those who gathered to form the St. Joseph Society. Teofil Bartnicki, in his introduction to the records of the St. Joseph Society, discussed these intra-group divisions:

Polish immigrants felt isolated from the local population because they spoke little English and did not know the local customs. However, there were significant divisions within this ethnic group. Polish people of Salem came from all different parts of the old country: Some were from the East, which was under the Russia rule, others from the West, under the German rule and yet another group from the more free Galicja region of Southern Poland, under the Austro-Hungarian rule. They found themselves thrown together and compelled to form a cohesive community here in the new country. The frictions between the various groups often manifested themselves as loud quarrels and fights, which often took place during large social gathering such as weddings and christening celebrations. The participants of those rows on occasions ended up in a hospital or at the courthouse.

Mary Nowak, who came to Salem from the Austrian partition in 1913 when she was three years old, recalled being able to tell from people's accents which part of Poland they had come from, and how "there was some people...that made fun of those that

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<sup>94</sup> This article, from an undated newspaper, was provided by Tyburc's grandson Frank.

<sup>95</sup> Sub-groups of immigrants often referred to one another by regional terms. *Prusaki*, *Galicjaki*, or *Ruski* reflected the partitioned areas (Obidinski and Zand, *Polish Folkways in America*, 30) while specific provincial or regional identifications like Kaszubs, Poznanians, and Silesians were also used (Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 11).

came from a certain part of Poland.” Catholicism was perhaps the strongest bond among the immigrants, but even that aspect of Polish identity was not without variation and contention. As John Bukowczyk has put it, many immigrants wrestled with the difference between being “a Roman Catholic Pole or a Polish Roman Catholic”<sup>96</sup>—that is, were they Poles first and foremost (an identity that some in the community saw as including those of other faiths, or no faith) or was being a Catholic an essential element of being Polish? This question was related to the practical and political issues surrounding the power of the priests in Polish immigrant communities. Was the priest the ultimate authority, or just one leader among others? These questions were by no means settled in the early decades of Polish settlement in the U.S.

The early records of the St. Joseph Society meetings suggest that the organization experienced some of the same conflicts over the role of Catholicism that were taking place elsewhere in Polish communities in the U.S. at this time. At the St. Joseph Society’s fourth meeting, in June 1899, members decided to invite Pastor Jan Chmielinski of Boston to hear confessions in the Polish language. The priest complied with this request, but not all members chose to participate; at the July meeting, the record book notes that the society’s Vice President, Antoni Dubiel, had refused to make Confession, and “because of pressure, resigned from the Society.” In February 1900, B. Sobocinski (either Bronislaus or Boleslaw) was fined a dollar—a significant amount at the time—for not participating in the Confession. Later that year, Alexander Kotarski, one of the original members in both 1897 and 1899 and a very prominent member of Salem’s Polish community, was expelled because he was “publicly, outside of Society meeting, criticizing and making fun of religious practices of the Society.” In 1902, Karol Kolm, who had been an officer in the society, was also expelled for “mocking of the religious practices.” In January of 1909, when the group was occupied with building its new hall, “Some members spoke in favor of joining a more religious Polish Union,” suggesting either that some were finding the society too taken up by financial and business matters for their taste, that it had become less centrally involved in religious matters (perhaps since the arrival of a full-time priest to minister to the parish), or both.

It appears that the St. Joseph Society did resolve the issue in favor of being “a more religious Polish Union,” because in 1912 it became a chapter of the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America (PRCUA).<sup>97</sup> The PRCUA was an important national fraternal

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<sup>96</sup> Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 46.

organization that was seen as one of the staunchest supporters of church authority in Polish America—to the extent that many in the early Polish settlements in the U.S. worried that the PRCUA was in danger of becoming an organization “for the Polish priests in America, not for the Polish people.”<sup>98</sup> The PRCUA combined conservatism and progressivism in dynamic and sometimes paradoxical ways. In one sense, the PRCUA was quite conservative and hierarchical, advocating for obedience to clerical authority. At the same time, it could be highly progressive and communitarian in its support for the rights of workers, its view of women as the foundation of community life, and its holistic vision of how education, family, spirituality, and social life could work together and reinforce each other and resist some of the fragmentation caused by urban, industrial, capitalist societies.<sup>99</sup> And the debates over what it meant to be Polish, Catholic, and Polish American took place within its ranks as well as in Polish communities at large.

We can hear echoes of these debates in the translated early minutes of the St. Joseph Society in Salem. Those who were expelled or resigned over religious infractions may have been among those who questioned whether Poles in America should organize themselves centrally around Polish Roman Catholicism, and may have chosen to affiliate themselves with different mutual assistance organizations because of those debates—for example, the two local chapters of the Polish National Alliance, which tended to favor a more secularist vision of Polish identity (see Appendix F for more background on these other organizations). In the absence of records from the other fraternal organizations in Salem, it is not possible to trace the shifting or overlapping allegiances among the various groups and factions. The early St. Joseph’s Society record seems to suggest that the majority of its membership supported the centrality of the church in the community, although as we will see in the section of the next chapter describing the founding and development of Salem’s Polish parish, that does not mean that they inevitably agreed with or deferred to their priests.

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<sup>97</sup> “Alter Society Parade Route to Pass Member’s House,” Salem Evening News, May 31, 1949. In his speech to the St. Joseph Society membership on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary, then-President Bernard Kaminski recalled the Society joining the PRCUA in 1912. Translation of more of the handwritten Society minutes might provide more information about this decision. The PRCUA was founded in 1873 and headquartered, like most of the national organizations, in Chicago.

<sup>98</sup> Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 38.

<sup>99</sup> Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 2-3, 59, 114.



Figure 12 An early group of officers of the St. Joseph Society, with Teofil Bartnicki at far right.  
(Linda Moustakis)

Society members were also concerned about discipline and maintaining appropriate behavior and support among their members. In addition to religion-related disciplinary actions, the minutes report frequent imposition of penalties for a variety of offenses: missing a meeting, speaking out of order and disturbing the meeting, failure to pay dues, breaking into the building to use the hall after hours, and intoxication at public events. These fines ranged from about 25 cents for missing a meeting to as much as \$5. In one case in 1909, Herman Tyburc, by that time a past president of the society, was fined 50 cents for not visiting the sick. The minutes note, “He disagreed with the fine, but Andrzej Suldzenski paid fine for Tyburc to keep him in the Society.”

The issue of intoxication and beer drinking at Society events and the club house came up many times at membership meetings and among Polish families, and it seems to have been a source of friction with their non-Polish neighbors as well. In 1905, the Society’s minutes noted, “There were complaints in the neighborhood about

the weddings being too loud and rowdy” and that “serving of beer continued to be accompanied by fights and rowdy behavior.” Excessive drinking was a concern in many Polish communities, in large part because of the preponderance of young single men who arrived as immigrants and also because of the culture of heavy drinking that they brought with them.<sup>100</sup> However, alcohol *per se* was not viewed as the problem; unlike many Protestant prohibition and temperance reformers, most Poles accepted the social use of wine, beer, and spirits. But many in the community—often priests, women leaders, and leaders of mutual assistance or fraternal organizations—saw excessive drinking as a danger to family welfare, spiritual purity, and Poles’ image and ability to thrive in American society.<sup>101</sup> Polish temperance or anti-drinking efforts generally failed to connect with the broader U.S. temperance movement because of this acceptance of spirits and the focus on individual failing as opposed to political and legal reform.<sup>102</sup> Overall, it may be that assimilation and socioeconomic mobility gradually accomplished the goals of encouraging moderation.<sup>103</sup> But focused efforts from within the community—notably from the PRCUA—did contribute over time to a decrease in heavy use of alcohol among Polish Americans. The PRCUA’s newspaper, *Naród Polski*, frequently editorialized against the evils of drink, noting in 1902, “Liquor brings along with it not only one evil but a long series of the most terrible misfortunes to which a human being is exposed, such as sickness, poverty, crime, insanity and family quarrels.”<sup>104</sup>

These concerns about drinking were reflected in discussions and debates with Salem’s St. Joseph Society. From early on, there was some discomfort with the pairing of drinking and the Society’s patron saint, St. Joseph. The club pins distributed to members in 1900 featured a picture of St. Joseph, but some felt that it was not appropriate to wear the pin while dancing and drinking. In 1904 there was a disagreement over whether or not they should sell beer in the rented hall on Derby Street. The anti-beer contingent won the first vote, but a subsequent vote allowed beer sales. This allowed beer to be

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<sup>100</sup> William Galush, “The Unremembered Movement: Abstinence among Polish Americans,” *Polish American Studies* Vol. 58, No. 2 (August 2006), 13.

<sup>101</sup> Galush, “The Unremembered Movement,” 19-20.

<sup>102</sup> Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 128-30.

<sup>103</sup> Galush, “The Unremembered Movement,” 22.

<sup>104</sup> Galush, “The Unremembered Movement,” 18.

served on all days except Sunday, with penalties for intoxication. “The Society continued to make efforts to eliminate the unruly behaviour associated with beer consumption by its members.” Difficulties with drinking-related behavior continued, however, both inside the club hall and outside. When some members traveled to Lawrence to participate in the consecration of the Polish Church there in February 1905, one member had to pay a fine for drunkenness. The Society also had to impose penalties on some members who broke into the Derby Street Hall after hours. In October 1905, frustrated with the “fights and rowdy behavior” that accompanied the consumption of beer, the Society decided to ban the sale of beer at their meetings.

The early activities of the St. Joseph Society show that members were very aware of what was happening in their partitioned homeland and that many saw themselves as part of the Polish nation even in diaspora.<sup>105</sup> One incident that particularly resonated among Poles in America was the “Wrzesnia Affair” of 1901-1904. This incident was part of the *Kulturkampf* or “germanification” campaign in the German-controlled section of Poland, in which the longstanding use of the Polish language in schools had been forbidden. Protesting parents and children were physically and legally disciplined, and the affair became a *cause célèbre* in the U.S. when it was publicized through the newspapers of the PRCUA and its chief rival, the Polish National Alliance. Poles in the U.S., who were already feeling their culture and language to be threatened by the Americanizing effects of the Irish-dominated American Catholic Church, expressed solidarity with the school strikers, largely through fundraising and rallies in their community organizations.<sup>106</sup> Polish leaders in the U.S. used the school strike as an opportunity to raise American awareness of Poland’s plight, to reinforce the ideal of a unified Poland among fragmented first-generation immigrants, and to make the point that in America, as elsewhere, Poles needed to be vigilant about attempts to eradicate their culture.<sup>107</sup> The Wrzesnia affair was one of the first moments of broad cooperation among

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<sup>105</sup> A sense of belonging to the Polish nation appears to have been one element among various types of collective identity for many of the immigrants, and not all shared it to the same extent. One historian has argued that, “The idea of Polishness developed slowly” both in Europe and in diaspora, but that, “Peasants who immigrated to America...often ‘became Polish’ much faster than their counterparts back home in Poland,” reflecting the fact that diverse communities of immigrants often used Polish nationalism as a common element around which to begin building their new sense of shared identity in diaspora (Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 10).

<sup>106</sup> Blejwas, ““To Sing Out the Future,” 21-24.

<sup>107</sup> Blejwas, ““To Sing Out the Future,” 34-36.

the leading Polish American organizations, laying the groundwork for similar cooperative efforts during the two world wars and illustrating the importance of Polish politics within the diaspora, as well as showing how the immigrants could and did participate in political struggles in the homeland.<sup>108</sup>

The St. Joseph Society in Salem held a ball in February 1902 for the benefit of the Wrzesnia school strikers, collecting \$14.00 for the cause. The fact that Salem's mayor was present at this ball indicates the way that Poles in America were able to heighten awareness of their partitioned country's suffering beyond their own community, and perhaps to use the high-profile affair to assert their own presence in their new American homes as well. Two days before the ball, Poles had rallied in Salem (probably with participation from the various mutual assistance societies in the area) and adopted a resolution calling for "all the peoples of the world," "in the name of international law and humanity," to condemn the Prussian repression of Polish culture.<sup>109</sup> The wording of the resolution reflects the romantic ethos of Polish nationalism in this era:

Love for our Fatherland, that bond joining the Polish nation, which bond no power can sever, joins us in every misfortune, in every heartbeat of the Polish people, every tear shed, every cry, forced by despair from the breast of Polish woman we feel the stronger because we are children of the Polish people to whom the blood of our fathers calls out recalling their sacrifice and that past of pain, suffering and struggle which is the history of our Fatherland.<sup>110</sup>

The St. Joseph Society regularly participated in patriotic celebrations of Polish Constitution Day on May 3 and the 1830 Uprising on November 29. Sometimes practical or perhaps inter-group considerations got in the way. In 1906, the Constitution Day celebration in Salem was organized by the St. John Society, a PNA chapter, which extended an invitation at the last minute, so that the St. Joseph Society ended up not participating. In 1908, the St. Michael's Society in nearby Lynn sent an invitation to a Constitution Day event that was also a protest against evictions of Polish farmers from their land in German-occupied areas of Poland. Since this event was scheduled on a weekday, the St. Joseph Society's members were unable to take the day off work to attend.

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<sup>108</sup> Blejwas, "'To Sing Out the Future,'" 39.

<sup>109</sup> Blejwas, "'To Sing Out the Future,'" 43.

<sup>110</sup> Blejwas, "'To Sing Out the Future,'" 43.

At times, too, political differences prompted the St. Joseph Society to reject invitations, such as the one from the Polish Workers' Party (PPS) in 1906 to join together at the consecration of the new Polish church in Lynn. The rejection of this invitation by the St. Joseph Society suggests how sharp the differences generally were between the conservative, church-based PRCUA and the secular, leftist PPS.<sup>111</sup>

In general, though, the St. Joseph Society maintained quite active connections with other Polish parishes and organizations in the region, often chartering special trains for their excursions. For example, the society participated in church consecrations and other celebrations in Lowell, Lynn, Lawrence, Peabody, and other area cities. In 1908, the minutes record the reading of a letter from "Romaszkewicz of Boston," expressing appreciation for the society's recent participation in a Boston event.<sup>112</sup> At times, the group's activities spanned ethnic boundaries, as when it was part of the consecration ceremony for the French Catholic church in Salem in 1901. The minutes note that the society purchased three flags for this occasion: Polish and American national flags and one for the society itself (presumably a PRCUA flag). In 1908, a number of Catholic churches in the area combined to raise funds for an orphanage in France that had requested assistance. However, these collaborations appeared to depend on the degree of reciprocity that already existed among the particular groups. In 1908, the Irish Society in Salem invited the St. Joseph Society to participate in a celebration, but it was decided to decline "since the St. Joseph Society never received any help from the Irish Society nor were there any common activities in the past." Mutuality, between groups as between individuals, depended on the maintenance of a regular network of association and reciprocation. (One of the most important forms of mutuality, of course, was financial, and this aspect of the Society's existence will be explored in the following chapter as part of a larger discussion of the economic and commercial life of the community.)

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<sup>111</sup> There is a large framed photograph of Josef Pilsudski, head of the PPS, in the Salem Maritime NHS collection, but it is difficult to infer a great deal from its presence there. Pilsudski was a national hero and leader after Poland regained its independence between the world wars, and the St. Joseph Society may have had the photo simply as a patriotic item. The park's collection also includes a number of items from the St. John Society, which disbanded earlier than the St. Joseph Society and which appears to have passed along a number of its records and artifacts to the still-extant St. Joseph Society. The St. John Society was a chapter of the Polish National Alliance, which was much more likely to have seen Pilsudski and the PPS in a positive light.

<sup>112</sup> Jan Romaszewicz was a prominent leader in regional and national Polish affairs, serving as the national president of the Polish National Alliance in the 1920s and 30s. His family and connections with Salem will be discussed more fully in Chapter Four.



The histories and individual case studies explored above have given a sense of how a Polish community was beginning to emerge and define itself in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Salem, how this related to the immigrants' previous lives in Europe, the role played by the St. Joseph Society in its first years, and how the new community intersected with the city's changing waterfront area. This chapter will conclude with one additional case study that will help to give a more complete picture of first-generation immigrants to the Derby Street neighborhood in this period. The life history of Alexander Konovalchik, who appears to have come from the Russian-occupied regions on the eastern side of Poland, shows some of the overlapping and negotiable layers of identity among the migrants, and how people in the neighborhood did not arrive neatly sorted into specific groups, but constructed and negotiated cultural boundaries for themselves over time in their new homes.

Just as Poles in the German partition were subject to a campaign of "germanification," those in the Russian partition to the east experienced attempts to "russify" them. Russian Poland had a particular preeminence in the Polish imagination because it incorporated Warsaw, Poland's capital since the late sixteenth century.<sup>113</sup> Relationships with other groups in this area were complex. Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Jews from throughout the region shared a resentment of Russian domination, yet Russia was able to play the competing nationalisms and cultural differences of these groups off against one another as well. In eastern Galicia, which included substantial populations of both Poles and Ukrainians, Polish elites were used as a landlord class, reinforcing old tensions.<sup>114</sup> Polish labor activism prompted Moscow to consolidate its industry within Russia proper, further impoverishing its Polish hinterlands and limiting opportunities for both educated and uneducated Poles.<sup>115</sup>

The sixth of eight children, Konovalchik was born in 1895 on a 70-acre farm near a town called Rakovichi, probably in either Belarus or Ukraine. It is not clear from the limited evidence about his life which area he came from. According to his daughter, Phyllis Luzinski, he spoke Russian and Polish, and perhaps Ukrainian as well. Like many people in both Belarus and Ukraine, he was a member of the Russian Orthodox

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<sup>113</sup> Lukowski and Zawadski, *Concise History*, 211-12.

<sup>114</sup> Lukowski and Zawadski, *Concise History*, 194.

<sup>115</sup> Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 11.

Church. His daughter's sense that "he was actually more Russian than Polish" suggests that he may have been from Belarus, north and east of Poland, rather than from Ukraine, which overlapped with part of the Austrian partition that included Galicia and where he was perhaps more likely to have spoken Ukrainian as a first language.<sup>116</sup> However, the evidence is inconclusive, and Konovalchik remains a figure whose life history suggests the religious, ethnic, linguistic, and national complexity of the regions around Poland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Not everyone who spoke Polish or came from the Polish partitions ultimately chose to identify as Polish in America. However, even among those who did not—like Alexander Konovalchik—there appears to have been considerable connection with those from the same general part of Europe. This was probably particularly true in a small city like Salem, where immigrants would have encountered each other in workplaces and other spaces of everyday life even if their religious and social networks were different.

Although the larger story surrounding his early days remains difficult to discern, Konovalchik left his family with an unusual amount of detail about his personal circumstances before coming to America. Later in life, drawing on the basic literary skills he had acquired in English, he produced a hand-written memoir telling about his experiences as a child and young man. Both of his parents were from poor families, but on his mother's side, at least, this poverty was relatively recent: "[My mother's family] were well off[f], as long as all the boys stay together, but as soon as they get married, they divide the farm into four parts, and all become poor." This family story contains familiar elements of rural homes with thatched roofs and no chimneys, sons conscripted into the military (the Russian army, in this case), family land too poor to support successive generations, and children struggling to obtain a basic education. Konovalchik completed four years of school, finishing in 1910 and was then "given into service" to a series of more prosperous farmers and landlords.

Phyllis Luzinski's recollection of her father is that he came to America, like many young men at that time, to avoid military conscription. He arrived in New York City at around age 18 and found his way somehow to New Hampshire. There he met and married Phyllis's mother, who had emigrated with her mother some time earlier.

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<sup>116</sup> One additional piece of evidence that perhaps suggests Belarus rather than Ukraine is that in his written memoir, he uses the archaic Russian term *dessatien* (a measure of land approximately equivalent to 2.7 acres). While not conclusive, it seems more typical of Belarus, which was absorbed much more fully into Russia proper than Galicia and the rest of Ukraine.

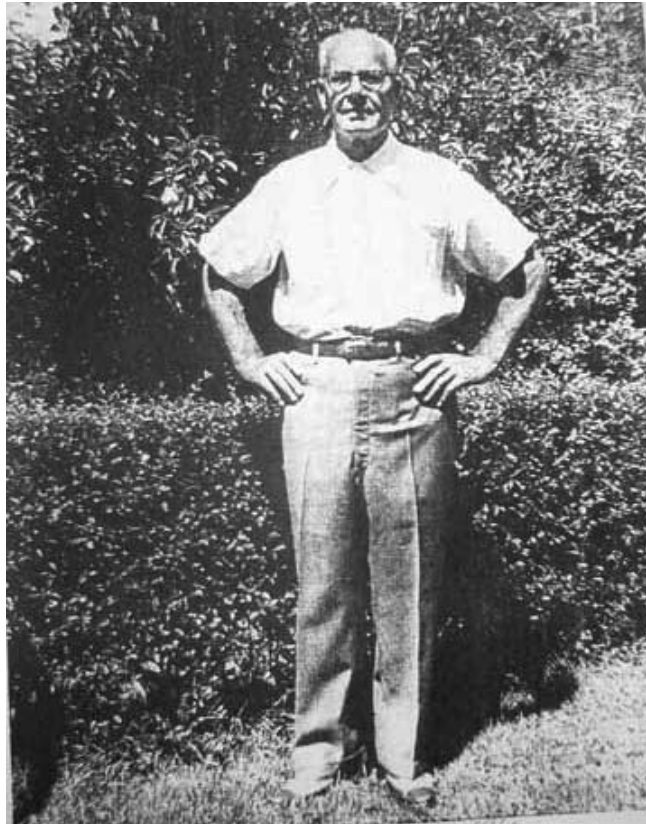


Figure 13 Alexander Konovalchik, c. 1958. (Phyllis Luzinski)

Konovalchik was active in St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox church in Salem, and his funeral service was conducted there when he died in 1960. The history of this parish also hints at the overlapping identities that made up the neighborhood in the early twentieth century. St. Nicholas Church was founded in 1901 by Galician immigrants who adhered to Orthodox Christianity—that is, the Greek Orthodox faith historically centered in Constantinople rather than Roman Catholicism centered in Rome. Eastern Orthodoxy was widespread in Eastern Europe and Russia, including throughout Ukraine and Belarus, and the broad presence of the Orthodox faith was one of the reasons that Polish Catholics considered themselves to be a crucial bulwark for Roman Catholicism in the region. In addition, a substantial minority of Ukrainians followed the Ukrainian or Uniate Catholic Church, a hybrid form of Catholicism whose liturgy resembles that of Eastern Orthodox churches but which is affiliated with Rome. In its early days, St. Nicholas in Salem had a series of visiting priests, including a Uniate priest, suggesting that at the beginning, the parish may have been organized more around a Galician or Ukrainian identity than a purely Orthodox one.

By 1906, however, parishioners at St. Nicholas had broken with the Uniate Church and petitioned the Orthodox Church for a priest of their own.<sup>117</sup> In 1908, they completed a distinctive onion-domed wooden church which still stands, recently renovated, on Forrester Street at the eastern end of the Derby Street neighborhood. In this sorting-out of Salem's Eastern European immigrants into different religious groupings—Russians at the Orthodox church, Jews at the Sons of Jacob synagogue (established in 1898), Poles at the Roman Catholic church (established in 1903), Ukrainians at the Uniate Catholic church (founded in 1908)—we can see how these newcomers gravitated to particular sub-communities, often organized around religion, within the city's ethnic enclaves.

However, these processes of self-selection also likely flattened out some of the multiple layers of individual people's identities. For example, Alexander Konovalchik seems to have become identified as "more Russian" in large part because his faith was Orthodox. But his ethnic or national identity may in fact have been Belarussian or Ukrainian, he seems to have spoken at least two and perhaps more of the languages of the region, and he was married to a Polish woman. His daughter Phyllis was baptized in the Eastern Orthodox faith but became a member of St. John the Baptist Polish Catholic Church in later childhood and married a man whose family was more unambiguously Polish. Lithuanians, Czechs, Slovaks, and other Eastern Europeans were part of this mingling of people through marriage, commerce, and everyday life in Salem as elsewhere in the U.S. Stanley Rybicki's family background contained these kinds of mixed layers: "To tell you the truth, I never knew whether my father was Russian, Polish, Ukrainian, or what. He spoke Russian, he was with the Russian people all the time. I have some military records of his that have his name listed as a Russian name, but he always went under the name Rybicki..." The dividing line between Jews and Christians appears to have been more definite, at least in terms of worship, intermarriage, and social organization, but many Eastern European Jews lived and did business in the Derby Street neighborhood, and many of them were also multilingual, with shared memories of the homelands of the other immigrants. Dorothy Filip, a granddaughter of Wladyslaw and Franciszka Sobocinski, recalled that her grandmother

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<sup>117</sup> Oleg Yelemyanov, "'An Early History of St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, Salem, Massachusetts'" (Salem: St. Nicholas Orthodox Church), 6-8.

could speak German, Yiddish. . . When they settled here she would often, you know, converse with a lot of the immigrants that were arriving here. . . I never knew my grandmother, I only knew my grandfather and he died when I was five. But I remember Ma saying that he used to get upset because some of the Jewish doctors used to come and talk to my grandmother and they'd shut the door! And she'd talk to them in—you know, they could understand each other.

Yiddish-speaking Polish Catholics thus may have had more points of connection with Polish Jews, especially those from the same region, than with Poles who came from a different region or spoke a different dialect. Like many who grew up in the Derby Street neighborhood, Phyllis Luzinski, Alexander Konovalchik's daughter, recalled being friendly with Jewish families in the area, including those who owned businesses, but noted that most no longer lived in the neighborhood itself. "It seemed as though they had been here before us," she said, "and they had already started their good lives"—that is, they had begun the shift into the middle-class prosperity that was the goal for so many who had migrated to America.

What we know of Alexander Konovalchik's story shows a process of encounter, selection, and settlement that immigrants from all of the Polish regions experienced in and around Salem. The next chapter will investigate how those who defined themselves specifically as Polish within this varied group of people put down deeper roots in the Derby Street neighborhood and the city in the first decades of the twentieth century.

# CHAPTER THREE

## MAKING SALEM HOME:

### SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL INFRASTRUCTURE

#### IN THE IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY, 1899-1909

#### Overview

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the diverse and dynamic immigrant population whose outlines were described in Chapter Two became more firmly established in Salem's industrialized waterfront neighborhood. This chapter and the three that follow it will explore aspects of the life of the community through a number of sites and organizations in that strikingly compact section of the city, as shown on the map below:

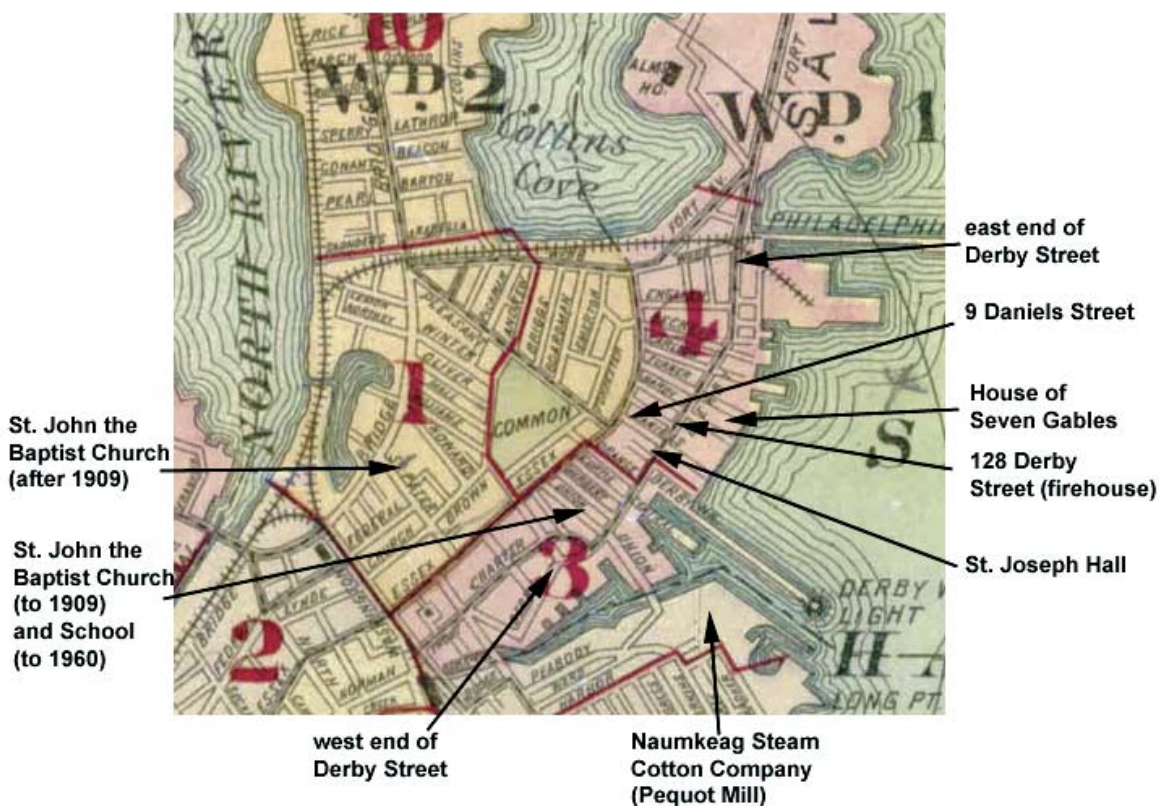


Figure 14 Chapters Three through Six will focus on selected sites in Polish Salem, as shown on this section of the 1897 Salem map.

As the twentieth century began, migration from the Austrian and Russian partitions was swelling the numbers of Poles in America exponentially. Between a million and a half and two million Polish immigrants arrived in the U.S. in the years between the turn of the twentieth century and World War I.<sup>1</sup> By 1914, as a result of immigration and population growth, there were some four million Poles in the U.S., making it the largest central European immigrant community in the U.S. at that time.<sup>2</sup> The numbers of new arrivals peaked in 1913, when almost 175,000 people arrived; many settled in Midwestern cities, particularly Chicago, which had the largest concentration of Poles with 400,000 in 1918.<sup>3</sup> Pennsylvania, with its coal and steel industries, was also home to large numbers.<sup>4</sup> Although New England's Polish population was not as large overall, sizeable communities quickly formed here as well, particularly in industrial cities like Boston (most notably in its Chelsea section), Lowell, Lawrence, Lynn, Worcester, Springfield, and Chicopee. By 1911, the Polish population of Salem was estimated to be around 3,500 people, or eight per cent of the city's population, living primarily in Wards One (the Derby Street area) and Two (the neighborhood north and west of Webb Street, at the east end of the Derby Street neighborhood).<sup>5</sup> A smaller cluster lived in Ward Six, across the North River off of North Street.<sup>6</sup> Unlike many of the earlier immigrants from the German-occupied areas of Poland, the new arrivals from the Austrian partition were mostly of rural backgrounds.<sup>7</sup> Some of these immigrants settled in farming areas, including in central and western

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<sup>1</sup> Daniels, *Coming to America*, 219; Pula, *Polish Americans*, 19.

<sup>2</sup> Lukowski and Zawadzki, *Concise History*, 189.

<sup>3</sup> Pula, *Polish Americans*, 19.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew S. Magda, *The Polish Presence in Pennsylvania* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania Historical Association, 1992), 120.

<sup>5</sup> "Remarkable Progress of Poles in Salem," Salem Evening News, n.d. [1911?] The overall population of Salem was 43,917 in 1910.

<sup>6</sup> Alphonse S. Bachorowski, "Seventy Years in Sale," Lecture at Essex Institute, February 4, 1930, published in undated, unknown source. Also see Borkowski, "One Hundred Fifteen Years," 25-26.

<sup>7</sup> Bukowczyk reports that about a third of the Austrian Poles who came to the U.S. were peasants and independent small farmers, while close to half were agricultural day-laborers Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 11.

Massachusetts, where they often took over older farmland and made it profitable again.<sup>8</sup> But the majority found themselves in industrial cities like Salem, where they had to adapt to very new patterns of living and working.

Wanda Walczak, daughter of Felix Soboczinski's oldest sister Anna, was born in Salem in 1902; in a 1978 interview, she recalled the rapid changes she saw in the Derby Street neighborhood during her early years:

That area at that time was just beginning to get settled by Polish people. When I was growing up, my playmates were all Irish. . . [T]here were very few Irish [Polish?] people. But then they kept coming in in the 1900s, the immigration started to come in more from Germany and Russia and Austria and there was more and more of them coming in. And they'd live with the people that were there—and my mother said many times that she didn't want anybody, but they'd be begging her, just if they could have a place to sleep, even on the floor, just so they could be with their own people, just until they got settled.

Settling and supporting the growing numbers of newcomers was increasingly an issue for Polish communities at this time, and established organizations such as the St. Joseph Society played important roles in broadening the social, spiritual, and economic infrastructure for new arrivals. Two important projects for Salem's St. Joseph Society were the founding of a Polish Roman Catholic parish and the construction of their own, purpose-built meeting hall.

## St. John the Baptist Polish Roman Catholic Church

The present-day St. John the Baptist Polish Roman Catholic Church in Salem is a red brick church with white trim on St. Peter Street, just west of Salem Common and several blocks away from the Derby Street area. The church's quite plain shape and exterior suggest its origins as a New England Protestant house of worship; it was built by a Baptist congregation in 1826 and later sold to what was then a rapidly-growing Polish parish.<sup>9</sup> On one side of the church is a nineteenth-century residence that is used as a rectory. On the other is a one-story brick school, now empty, built in 1960 as part of a modernization effort by the Polish parochial school in Salem. However, the parish's history pre-dates the church's location on St. Peter Street. The site of the city's first Polish

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<sup>8</sup> Borkowski, "One Hundred Fifteen Years," 14; Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 19-20.

<sup>9</sup> Carberg, "Rediscovering Salem Polonia."



church is now one of a pair of parking lots that face each other across Herbert Street, at the western end of the Derby Street neighborhood. These spaces were once occupied by a cluster of four buildings that comprised the original Polish school and—until 1909—the church as well. These places served as a spiritual and educational center for the community starting in the early years of the twentieth century, and the church on St. Peter Street is still the home of an active ethnic parish. The educational side of these sites will be examined in more detail in Chapter Four; this section will trace the early history of the parish itself at both its Herbert and St. Peter Street locations.<sup>10</sup>

The Roman Catholic Poles who came to Salem in the late nineteenth century initially had no place of their own to worship. There were already 75 Polish Catholic parishes in the U.S. by 1880, as immigration from Poland was beginning to surge. By 1900, there were 330 parishes, which had increased to 760 by 1920.<sup>11</sup> Waclaw Kruszk's 1908 history of the Poles in America reports that by 1904, there were 73 parishes and chapters of national Polish societies in Massachusetts.<sup>12</sup> The Polish Roman Catholic Union of America (PRCUA), of which the St. Joseph Society was a member, was particularly active in supporting the establishment and growth of Polish parishes,<sup>13</sup> and it is clear from the early records of the St. Joseph Society that a primary goal for the organization was to spearhead the formation of a Polish Catholic parish in Salem. The Society was, as Wanda Walczak put it in a 1988 speech at a Salem Polish festival, "the steering group that set out to raise funds for a Polish Roman Catholic Church." Our Lady of Czestochowa Church had been established in South Boston in 1893, within the same Archdiocese that encompassed the North Shore area, and in June 1899, at the Salem society's fourth meeting, members decided to invite Father Jan Chmielewski of Boston to hear

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<sup>10</sup> Unless otherwise noted, information about St. John the Baptist Church is drawn from the 75<sup>th</sup> and 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary histories produced by the church and from the record book of the St. Joseph Society.

<sup>11</sup> Donald E. Pienkos, *PNA: A Centennial History of the Polish National Alliance of the United States of America* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1984), 9.

<sup>12</sup> Waclaw Kruszk, *A History of the Poles in America to 1908* (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press 1998[1905-1908]), 255.

<sup>13</sup> Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 20.

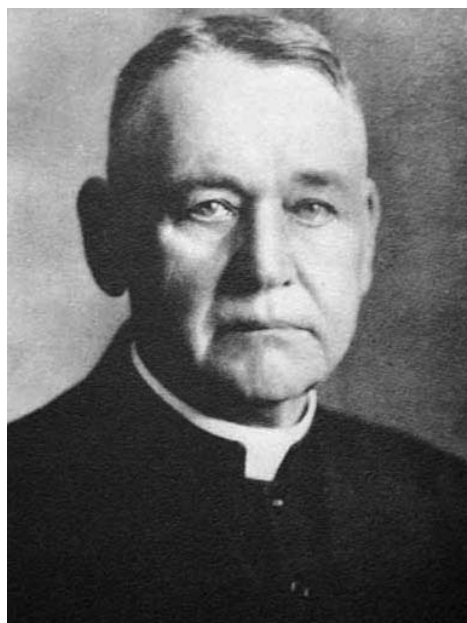


Figure 15 Father Jan (John) Chmielewski, pastor of Our Lady of Czestochowa Church in South Boston. (Our Lady of Czestochowa Church)

confessions in the Polish language.<sup>14</sup> This became a quarterly event (causing, as we have already seen in Chapter Two, some dissent within the Society among members who held different views about how religiously-oriented the group should be).

It is not clear from the minutes where the quarterly confessions were held. At some point, however, the Polish Catholics worked out an arrangement with the Irish Immaculate Conception church on what was then Walnut Street (now Hawthorne Boulevard) to hold Mass in their basement. As with other Catholic immigrant groups, Poles often experienced conflict with the well-entrenched, mostly Irish hierarchy in the American Catholic Church.<sup>15</sup> But on the local level in Salem, there seems to have been some cooperation, perhaps reflecting the city's relatively small size and the fact that no single ethnic group or enclave was large or dominant enough to be really insulated from others.

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<sup>14</sup> The St. Joseph Society record book states that Father Chmielewski came to Boston in 1901 and "asked the Polish community in Salem to help raise funds for the construction of a Polish church in Boston. In turn, he would come to Salem and perform some pastoral duties here, in the basement of the Irish Church of the Immaculate Conception."

<sup>15</sup> Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 27.

However, the early minutes of the St. Joseph Society do reveal some signs of tension with both the Irish parishioners and the visiting Polish priest. According to the St. Joseph Society minutes, the agreement with Chmielewski was that “in the future, when the Polish population in Salem rose in numbers, the Polish parish in Boston would help with the funding for a Polish church in Salem.” This does not seem to have happened quickly enough to suit the Salem Poles, who were frustrated by their lack of control over the basement space in the Irish church and angered by apparent acts of rudeness such as an incident in 1900 when “the local custodian walked in wearing his cap and walked around, disrespectful of the service.” Outraged, leaders called a community meeting and asked Father Chmielewski to help them establish their own church, for which they had already begun to raise money. When the priest expressed doubts about the feasibility of the idea and proposed to keep the funds already raised in the Boston parish account, the St. Joseph Society immediately decided to return the money to the donors or to keep it in the society’s own bank account. Chmielewski criticized these actions from the pulpit, and relations between the Boston priest and the Salem Poles deteriorated sharply, contributing to a brief hiatus in the society’s activities in the winter of 1900-1901.

Control of parish funds and property was very often a subject of debate and even open rebellion in the early years of Polish America. In these debates, we can see the tension between a traditional clerical hierarchy and a group of immigrants who took their rights as both Poles and Americans very seriously, often using their new status as wage-earning American residents to challenge the priests’ authority. In this struggle, priests were often caught between the Irish Catholic establishment and “property-conscious parishioners”<sup>16</sup> who were demanding a greater say in their own parishes. Historian Victor Greene believes that this tension was a core ingredient in the formation of a sense of Polish American identity and nationalism, as Catholic Poles tried to find ways to reconcile their loyalty to the church with their growing sense of their own political and economic independence in the U.S.

In the case of Salem, it appears that the members of the St. Joseph Society were successful in challenging their priest. In early 1901, Chmielewski agreed to support the society’s goals of raising funds to form a local parish. Starting in 1901, he sent one of his assistants, Father Joseph Czubek, born in Toledo, Ohio in 1875, to conduct services

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<sup>16</sup> Greene, *For God and Country*, 68.

in Salem and elsewhere in the area.<sup>17</sup> Father Czubek appears to have started off on the right foot with his new parishioners, as the record book reports that he “came to Salem [in 1901], spoke supportively of the Society and even joined it, which he announced at church.” Czubek was appointed the first pastor of St. John the Baptist Polish Roman Catholic Church in Salem when the parish was founded two years later.

Polish Catholic priests in America may by this point have learned that they needed to be cautious in challenging their flocks. In many immigrant communities, debates over control of parish resources resulted in parishioners breaking away to form independent churches; a national association of these splinter parishes coalesced into the Polish National Catholic Church in 1904. Close to Salem, a similar situation had arisen in Lowell, where a group of Poles broke away in 1900 after Chmielewski did not meet their request for a parish of their own. Wacław Kruska, a nationalist priest who pushed the PRCUA for reforms in the early part of the century, printed a report from a sympathetic New England priest about the situation in his 1908 history of the Poles in America:

The number of Poles living in Salem or Lowell comes to over 1,000 souls, and therefore, both places will soon have their own shepherd, which should have happened six years ago; as rumor has it, if this had come about at the appropriate time, there wouldn't have been an independent group headed by Papon [a Polish preacher who founded an independent parish in Lowell in 1900] in Lowell today!”<sup>18</sup>

The Lowell example may have helped to changed Chmielewski's mind the following year about supporting Salem's St. Joseph Society in its quest for its own parish, named after St. John the Baptist. In return, the society energetically fulfilled its function of supporting the church and its values.<sup>19</sup> In March 1900, when a weekly wage for a

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<sup>17</sup> Carberg, “Rediscovering Salem Polonia.”

<sup>18</sup> Kruska, *A History of the Poles*, 256.

<sup>19</sup> Many community members were involved in the founding of both the St. Joseph Society and St. John the Baptist Church, and it is difficult to determine from the fragmentary evidence who the central leaders in these efforts were (or, indeed, whether these were such broad collective projects that leadership was highly dispersed among many people). It is worth noting here that a c.1936 newspaper article about Władysław and Franciszka Sobocinski's 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary celebration states that “In 1904 [Władysław] assisted Rev. Father Czubek, Martin Krelakowski and Herman Tyburc to form St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic church on Herbert Street.” Krelakowski's name does not appear in the early records of the St. Joseph Society which have been translated, but it is possible that he may have been part of the “Kulakowski” family that hosted young Felix Sobocinski and perhaps others in the Sobocinski family when they first arrived in Salem. “Daniels Street Couple Observing Their 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary,” no publication name, no date (c. 1936). Sobocinski family records.

factory worker in Salem might be five dollars a week, the society presented its visiting priest with a new cope, or cloak, which cost \$50. The society also committed to providing six members as candle-holders at Sunday services, further underscoring the close relationship between the mutual assistance organization and the parish.

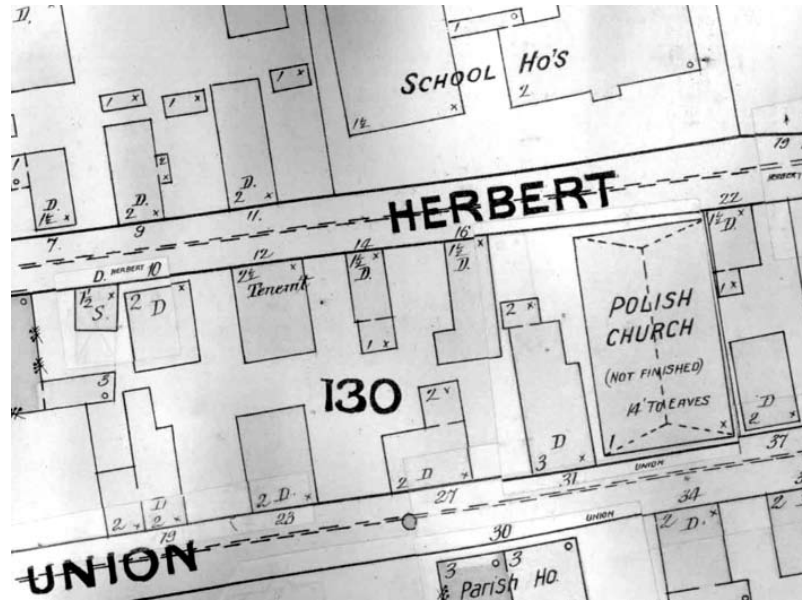


Figure 16 Detail from the 1890-1903 Salem city map shows the unfinished church with the building used as a rectory/convent, 31 Union Street, to the left. (Essex County Registry of Deeds.)

The Salem Poles appear to have raised the money for their new church quite quickly—a thousand dollars, according to Wanda Walczak—and the parish purchased a piece of property by 1903. Information about the actual establishment of the church is incomplete, and bears further research. An examination of Salem city maps from 1874, 1897, and 1903 shows that the properties that became the Polish church and school complex originally had a number of different owners and uses (see Appendix I). One property, running between Herbert and Union Streets, is shown as being owned by the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company in 1874 and 1897. There is a single structure on this property, designated as 31 Union Street, shown on these two maps; Edward Carberg has described this as a Federal-era wooden building.<sup>20</sup> The Polish parish used this existing building first as a rectory and later as a convent for the Felician sisters who came to teach at the school, and constructed a new church building on the south side of the lot. On the

<sup>20</sup> Carberg also states that this building may have been moved to the Union Street lot in the 1870s, having previously stood south of the Immaculate Conception Church.

1903 map, this church is noted as “not finished”; on the 1906 map, it is completed.<sup>21</sup> The first Mass was held in the new building “amid great exultation and solemnity” on July 3, 1903, and a “festive day of consecration” was celebrated two days later, with the St. Joseph Society playing host to delegations from Lawrence and Boston for the occasion.

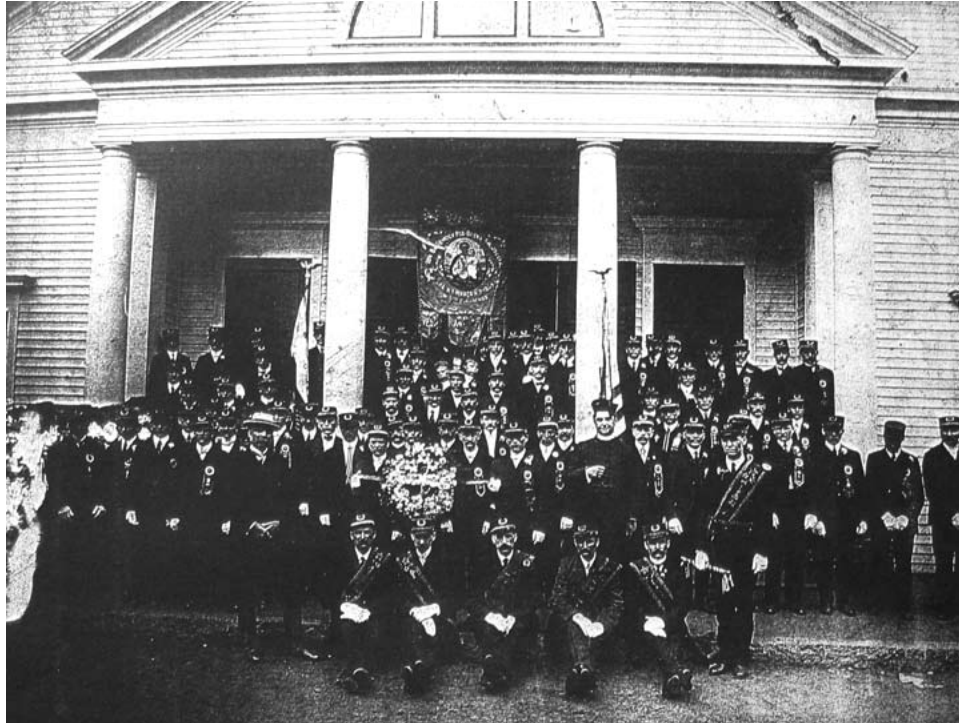


Figure 17 An early photograph of the St. Joseph Society with Father Joseph Czubek (in front of pillar on the right) in front of the original St. John the Baptist Church (later part of the parish school) on Herbert Street, c.1903-1909. (Raymond Sobocinski)

The new church building served an important dual function: its basement offered space where the community could establish a parochial school.<sup>22</sup> However, with Salem’s

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<sup>21</sup> Other religious communities were establishing themselves in the neighborhood in the same decade. In addition to St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church on Forrester Street (which was founded in 1901 and completed its own building in 1908), the Sons of Jacob Jewish congregation, founded in 1898, bought the former Calvary Baptist Church at the head of Herbert Street, in the same block as the new Polish church, sometime between 1897 (when the city map still shows it as a Baptist church) and 1903. Carberg states that the Calvary Baptist Church’s new home, presumably after it left its Herbert and Essex Street corner, was the building at Bridge and Lemon Streets that later became, and remains, the St. John the Baptist Ukrainian (Uniate) Catholic Church.

<sup>22</sup> Wanda Walczak remembered being in a class of five children that was the second group to graduate from the Polish school. In her 1988 speech, she spoke about the first classes being held in the basement of the original Polish church, with eight grades housed in four classrooms.

Polish population—including those of school age—expanding rapidly in the early years of the twentieth century, the parish quickly seems to have outgrown its newly-built church, and almost immediately began searching for another space in which to worship. The 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary parish history states:

Gifted with foresight, Father Czubek foresaw that the Church on Herbert Street would soon be too small to properly accommodate the needs of the Parish membership. In 1906, therefore, he purchased an old, closed-down Central Baptist Church on St. Peter Street and, establishing a Parish committee to raise funds, began the long, slow process of adapting it to the needs of the parishioners of St. John's Polish Church.

Services were held at the St. Peter Street church beginning in 1909, and it was dedicated on August 21, 1909. The parish also bought an 1851 building at 24-26 St. Peter Street for use as a rectory.<sup>23</sup>

With the church's move to St. Peter Street, all of the original church building was available for the use of the school, which was established in 1908 and which enrolled 236 pupils in the 1908-1909 school year.<sup>24</sup> Over the years, however, the school continued to expand, eventually purchasing two buildings across Herbert Street. The one at 15 Herbert Street was already a public school—the Lynde School, built in 1869.<sup>25</sup> The building next to that on Herbert Street was a former church, which Carberg believes was previously a French Canadian Catholic church.<sup>26</sup> The four buildings—the 1903 Polish

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<sup>23</sup> St. John the Baptist Parish History, 7, 9, 80; August 21, 1910, "Dedication of new Polish Church on St. Peters St.," Salem Evening News, August 22, 1910; Carberg "Rediscovering Salem Polonia."

<sup>24</sup> This figure is from a letter to Alice Zujewski from the Felician Sisters Central Archive in Enfield, Connecticut.

<sup>25</sup> Carberg notes that the church had also previously been used as a kindergarten for Ward 1. It is not clear whether it was the church building *per se* that was used this way, or whether this might have been the Lynde School building next to it.

<sup>26</sup> Borkowski (p. 28) states that the school classes were taught in the basement of the church until 1926, when the parish bought the Lynde School and what she names as "Salem Bethel School" (the former church?) from the city of Salem. This chronology should be confirmed (see Chapter 7, Section 7.3). Carberg believes that the old church was built in 1827. It appears on the 1874 Salem map as "Catholic Church." On the 1897 map, it seems to have been attached to the Lynde School by a connecting passageway, and is not named separately from the school. On the 1890-1903 map, the two-building complex simply says "School Ho's [House]." In 1911, it is shown as "City Kindergarten School," suggesting that it was a public school site before being acquired by St. John the Baptist parish. Further research could be done to determine the earlier uses and the precise dates of purchase of these buildings by the Polish parish.

church, the convent at 31 Union Street, the old Lynde School and the former church next to it—constituted the campus of the Polish parochial school until the school changed locations in the 1960s. The history of the school and the memories of some of those who attended it will be explored in Chapter Four.



Figure 18 This view of the present-day lots on Herbert Street looks from the location of the former Lynde School across Herbert Street to the site of the original Polish church (approximately where the parked cars are) with the steeple of Immaculate Conception church in the background.

Although the church building on St. Peter Street has been slightly outside the core Polish neighborhood for most of its existence, it has always been an absolutely central element of the community. Spiritually and socially, it helped Salem's Poles to cohere as a distinct ethnic community in the early twentieth century, and it has been a crucial point of reference for Polish American observances and occasions in the city. In addition to attending regular worship services and celebrations, groups of parishioners have also held processions and parades that physically connected the various pieces of Polish Salem to the church. Members of the St. Joseph Society (and other fraternal, veterans, and other organizations as well) processed from their home base to the church for annual Masses.



Processions of schoolchildren also travelled between Herbert and Union Streets and the church, particularly in early May. As Buddy Walker recalled,

That was a big deal, May procession, and they used to march down from the church where it is now, you'd go down Federal Street and up and around and go down Church Street, up Washington and down Church. And the band would lead the whole thing, you know—the little angels, you know! [laughs] [It was] Usually May first, Holy Communion and everything, Mother's Day, a little combination.<sup>27</sup>



Figure 19 Schoolchildren and Felician nuns from the Polish school in procession from school to church in the 1940s. (Linda Moustakis)

If the church was in many ways the center of the community, the priests were among its most important leaders. In her 1988 Polish festival speech, Wanda Walczak described Father Czubek as not only a spiritual mentor, but “a teacher, consultant, social worker, interpreter, financial and legal advisor, and a job-finder for his people,” who was “greatly admired and respected by both the parishioners and the city officials and prominent

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<sup>27</sup> It seems possible that there are also echoes here of the older celebration of Polish Constitution Day on May 3, but the memory of that day seems to have passed out of common awareness or commemoration for most of the people that we spoke to for this study. Stanley Rybicki recalled people celebrating Constitution Day when he was a young boy, but noted that it was “kind of a subdued thing” at that point.

citizens of Salem.” Father Czubek remained as Salem’s priest until his death in 1940. In addition to being central to life at the church on St. Peter Street, the priests were very often present at club meetings, dinners, observances, and special occasions, reflecting how central the presence of the church was in the life of the community. One custom that involved the priest traveling throughout the community was *Swieconka*, or the ritual blessing of the Easter foods. Easter is the predominant religious holiday in Polish Catholicism, and many interviewees spoke about this tradition. In very large parishes, parishioners were more likely to take the food to the church to be blessed, but in smaller places like Salem, the priest made the rounds of all the houses.<sup>28</sup> In Mary Nowak’s recollection,

Years ago, people didn’t open their front doors, only when there was a funeral or when there was a big party going on in celebration of something. But for Easter, oh, the doors are wide open, everything is cleaned out, two weeks before Easter, make sure you’d better do the ceiling because it’s getting dark already from the coal and wood that they burn.

Foods for blessing usually included a ham, links of kielbasa, colored Easter eggs, salt, and sticks of butter carved to look like lambs—a skill that many of Salem’s Poles still practice. Bob Spychalski remembers, “We had a little table right inside the door, he was like Santa Claus, he had a lot of stations to go to, so you couldn’t invite him up!” Joan Davidowicz recalled in detail what the Easter visit from the priest was like:

There was a lot of pomp and circumstance. And you know, you did your eggs, and when you got a little older, you had your hair set in pincurls, that Easter Sunday. You had your good clothes, you know, you didn’t go out and buy clothes the way you did, you know, you got maybe a new Easter outfit. . . Every Easter, my mother would get a corsage and I’d pin it on, and my sister Dorothy. . . she was always the youngest, so she would get like, when she was two or three she’d get one rose made up like a flower. And then we’d all graduate—the other one would have two roses, the other one would have three roses, and then she’d get the full nine yards, you know!

. . . In those days, the priest got a lot of respect. I mean, he was the hand of God. And so when he was coming, it was just—it was great. And see, we had Polish people next door, Polish people across the street. So he would start there. And then depending, he would either come here or go over there. But I can remember running to the windows and, “He’s in the neighborhood!”

. . . And he’d come in and he’d speak and there’d be loose salt, there’d be the ham, the kielbasi, the colored eggs, the homemade bread, and the lamb made out

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<sup>28</sup> Obidinski and Zand, *Polish Folkways in America*, 69.

of butter. And what else did I miss—oh, and they have a delicacy that they called jellied pig’s feet. And the lady next door used to make it and send it over. God, they were wonderful. She used to do all the old-country cooking, and my mother never did. So she would just, when my grandmother, you know, wasn’t around, she would send some over. Because there were things that my grandmother didn’t make that she did. . . And so like I said, he would come in and he would bless and then of course there’d be under, very discreetly under one of the dishes there would be a few dollars for him. . . And I can remember as a kid, it was just so festive. . . It was nice. It’s too bad it’s died out.

In recent years, the custom has been to take the food—usually bread and colored Easter eggs in a basket—to the church. Dorothy Stupakiewicz related, “I make two dozen eggs and I color them, bring them to church, get them blessed, put them in a basket, get bread blessed, because the two biggest things for Easter are the blessed bread and the blessed eggs. If you can’t get anything else blessed, that’s what you bless.”

For earlier generations, Easter Monday was also a holiday for Poles in the U.S. Helen Zand reports that businesses with large numbers of Polish employees tended to close on Easter Monday because so many workers were absent.<sup>29</sup> One custom associated with that day that has almost entirely died out now is that young girls would be sprinkled with water or perfume, often by adult men. This custom was known in different places as *Smigus* or *Dyngus*; Buddy Walker referred to it as *Dyngus* and also as *Pokrovich*. Zand speculates that it is the continuance of an older rural tradition associated with drowning the winter and welcoming the spring by ritually anointing the women of child-bearing age.<sup>30</sup> Buddy Walker described how this was carried out in Salem:

So Monday was a no-work day as far as Polish generation. The leather business was probably slow anyhow or something, so they didn’t bother to go to work, and then they’d go around from house to house, they’d call it Dyngus. And if you didn’t offer them a drink they’d soak you, you know! So rather than get wet, they’d get a drink here and there. And they’d go from, you know, relative to relative, down the line, and even if they weren’t relatives, if they were Polish, they knew ‘em, you know, “kissing cousins.” Because they all came from the old country and they kind of cliqued together. . . It’s just one of those things that evaporate and you never notice. I know. . .for a while there, a few of the cities, Chelsea and that, were running a Dyngus dance, that’d be on Easter Monday. They’d have a dance and it was the same idea, the guys’d flick water and stuff like that.

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<sup>29</sup> Obidinski and Zand, *Polish Folkways in America*, 69.

<sup>30</sup> Obidinski and Zand, *Polish Folkways in America*, 70.

One local church custom showed that the boundaries among the different ethnic parishes could actually be somewhat porous. Phyllis Luzinski remembered that on one evening during Holy Week, there was a kind of “open house” at all the Catholic churches in Salem:

That was the only time I had ever been in some churches, you know. . . One night you would make a circle and go to the whole thing. It was always cold, I remember always being cold. Because it would be Holy Week, March or April, so it would be cold. . . I think that there were people there, but they weren’t doing anything really. It wasn’t a service. You’d just kind of walk through and maybe go down, or just walk down and look at the [Stations of the] Cross and things like that.

It is not clear when this custom began or ended (it no longer takes place). Phyllis Luzinski remembered these visits from her high school years in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and noted that it gave her an opportunity to meet people in other parishes whom she might not otherwise have encountered at the parishes of the Immaculate Conception, St. Mary’s, St. Anne’s, St. Joseph’s, St. James, and others.

Christmas was also a significant holiday, with Christmas Eve—*Wigilia*—being perhaps the most important family gathering and meal of the year. In Stanley Rybicki’s recollection, “Christmas Eve, you know, it was a time where everybody sat down for a meal, Christmas Eve. And I remember there was always an empty chair. That was for when Christ was to visit. . . Christmas Day was the secondary thing. It was Christmas Eve.” The central tradition at Christmas Eve was the breaking of the unleavened wafer known as *oplatek*, accompanied by giving a blessing for each member of the family. Jane Davidowicz, who grew up on Carlton Street in the 1920s, remembers, “You know, they didn’t have much money. . . They used to put a plate, like one for me, one for you, put an orange, put an apple, some candy—hey, that was a treat! That was terrific, I’m telling you. We used to look at the apples and see which one’s got the bigger one!” In a 1978 interview, Wanda Walczak recalled the custom of putting a little bit of hay under the tablecloth at Christmas Eve dinner, and the tradition of having an uneven number of dishes—seven, nine, or eleven—and always setting one extra place so that a poorer guest would be able to join the feast.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Walczak also recalled one of her uncles constructing a manger in a glass case, which he and his friends carried with them when they went carol-singing. People at the houses where they sang were expected to offer hospitality, and “Sometimes they treated them *too* well, with liquid refreshments!”

In Chapter Seven we will return to the present-day Polish church to note some of the recent changes affecting the parish. This section will conclude by looking briefly at the relationship of authority between parishioners and their pastors. As Joan Davidowicz noted, the priests were very important figures in the community. But as we have already seen in the story of the founding of St. John the Baptist parish, church members often did not hesitate to assert and act on their own views even when it meant defying their priests. Thanks to a 1956 sociological study of community organization in Salem, we are able to get a rare outsider perspective on these dynamics in Polish Salem. Although the event in question took place after the period on which we are focusing in this chapter, it sheds light on some earlier, important episodes in the church's history and on the push and pull of authority within the parish.

By the 1950s, the parish had decided to build a new school, and researchers Floyd Hunter, Ruth Connor Schaffer, and Cecil Ships followed the planning and fundraising process closely, paying particular attention to how various leaders in the Polish community were recruited for the project and how they went about raising support and money.<sup>32</sup> They wrote in some detail about the parish priest, whom they referred to by the pseudonym of "Father Starnitski." In fact, the priest at this time was Father Ladislaus Sikora, who was appointed to the parish in 1940.

However, Father Sikora had not been the bishop's first choice to replace the parish's founding pastor, Father Czubek. At first, Rev. Ladislaus Ciesinski had been appointed, but this appointment had provoked a bitter split within the parish. According to the researchers, two different factions had claimed the authority to negotiate over the choice of a successor to Father Czubek, and each faction had its own preferred candidate. When the bishop chose Ciesinski, neither group was happy, and a "church strike" erupted. "The church was picketed, leaders on each side made radio speeches, and the split within the ranks of leadership within the community was noised abroad in the larger community."<sup>33</sup> Hedwiga Kohn, a prominent member of the Salem Polish community in that period, remembered the "church strike" during a 1978 interview, although she had not been directly involved in the dispute:

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<sup>32</sup> Floyd Hunter, Ruth Connor Schaffer, and Cecil Ships, *Community Organization: Action and Inaction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956).

<sup>33</sup> Hunter et al., *Community Organization*, 59.

The strikers would stand outside and they would spit, you know... They were disgusted that we went to Mass, to services... They used to throw rotten eggs at our store, tomatoes. They'd have to go down and clean the windows up, you know. Just because we went to church... I don't know what it was all about, but it was heart-breaking. I kept going to church just the same, you know...

St. John the Baptist Church was by no means alone in this experience of controversy within the parish. Virtually all Polish parishes saw some level of conflict about issues of church control, use of the Polish language, or assignment of priests, as well as occasional conflict with the Irish-dominated American Catholic hierarchy.<sup>34</sup> The Polish church in nearby Lynn had experienced disputes between their priest and some parishioners in the 1920s over the parishioners' support for the socialist leader Josef Pilsudski, whom many in the conservative Polish Catholic establishment opposed, and a second conflict broke out in the 1930s over labor radicalism among the parishioners. As with the earlier episode in Lowell, the dissenting faction founded a new church affiliated with the breakaway Polish National Catholic Church; they were formally excommunicated by their former priest in 1940, and some Polish social organizations in Lynn demanded that PNCC sympathizers formally declare their support for the priest or risk being forced out of the organizations.<sup>35</sup>

In Lynn, the conflict between the Polish right and left was clearly in evidence, overlaid on the larger debate over how much power Polish clerics would have to make political and other decisions for the community. It is not clear whether similar issues were behind the dispute in Salem. Rev. Ciesinski, ordained in 1927, was a Salem native, and it seems possible that his appointment may have invoked existing community or personal rivalries. Whatever the cause, the clash was severe enough that at one point the cardinal came close to closing the church. Some Salem Poles joined the breakaway faction in the new PNCC church in Lynn.<sup>36</sup> Father Sikora was appointed nine months after the controversy began, and this choice appears to have been acceptable enough to both factions that the parish could begin to knit itself back together.

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<sup>34</sup>Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 27.

<sup>35</sup>Borkowski, "One Hundred Fifteen Years," 42-43.

<sup>36</sup>Borkowski, "One Hundred Fifteen Years," 42.

The incident reveals the Polish parishioners' assumption that they should have a voice in the running of their church, an assumption that was frequently at odds with the hierarchical nature of the Catholic Church. Hunter, Shaffer, and Ships discovered during their research that although Yankees in Salem tended to assume that the priest was a figure of great power in the Polish community, Father Sikora was actually considered by his parishioners to be "much less authoritative than persons in his position are rather widely believed to be."<sup>37</sup> For example, the researchers note that at the invitation of a member of the city's dominant Yankee group, Sikora had initially accepted a position on a Salem committee during the Second World War, but later resigned when he recognized that he was losing credibility among his own flock because he had not first consulted them on the matter. In fact, even when Sikora was made a Monsignor—the first Polish priest in the Boston archdiocese to reach that position—he knew better than to burst in with his news on a meeting of the school planning committee, whose chairman said to him afterward, "I am glad that you humbled yourself and didn't interrupt the meeting. You are a better man than that!"<sup>38</sup> This rare vignette shows that while the church played a central role in Polish Salem, its authority was always a matter of negotiation and subject to checks and balances of other community leaders and the parish as a body.

### **Building St. Joseph Hall: The St. Joseph Society Creates a Community Base**

The St. Joseph Society was the catalyst for the formation of a Polish parish in Salem, but oddly, its minutes for 1906-1909 make no mention of the purchase of the new church on St. Peter Street or the move to the new church building. This may have been because the Society was deeply absorbed in a new project in those years: constructing its own meeting hall. Within a few years of the group's founding, there were dissatisfactions with the rented or borrowed spaces where it gathered for meetings and other functions, and in May of 1904, a rent increase prompted discussion in the group about building their own hall. In October 1905, they explored the possibility of issuing bonds to purchase a hall that was for sale, but the \$1,400 price was considered to be too expensive. A committee was formed in March 1906 to find better accommodations, and in the

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<sup>37</sup> Hunter et al., *Community Organization*, 62.

<sup>38</sup> Hunter et al., *Community Organization*, 62.

meantime, the Society met in the basement of the newly-constructed church on Herbert Street, for which they had to pay only the cost of the electricity they used.

By July 1906, according to the handwritten records of the Society, “The matter of purchase of a hall was considered more urgent,” and members debated whether to build from scratch, buy an existing hall, or find some other solution. In September of 1906, former president and founding member Franciszek Sobocinski proposed that they purchase a house with an adjacent lot near his own family’s home at Daniels Street and Daniels Court, and use the lot to expand the building. However, this lot was rejected because it “did not offer a prominent street front,” suggesting that either the Society wanted to have a very visible presence in the community, that it was envisioning renting storefront space to businesses as a source of income, or both. At a meeting on December 2, 1906, it was announced that a property at 160 Derby Street was available, seemingly for a price of \$3,500.<sup>39</sup> It appears that among those who took the lead on the building issue

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<sup>39</sup> The minutes note that “it was agreed to pay \$1,800 for the sale.” With \$1,700 in the bank and the loan of \$100 from Wladyslaw Sobocinski, that amount would seem to have been made up with cash on hand. However, the record also notes that “a mortgage was taken out at Salem Five Cents Savings Bank for \$1,700” and adds parenthetically “so the price of the building was \$3,500.” The most likely scenario seems to be that the Society paid out \$1,800 in cash and took out a \$1,700 mortgage, adding up to the total price of \$3,500.

The existing buildings on the lot were a c.1840 brick tenement on the street side, a very small 1888 building behind it on Palfrey Court, and another small c.1874 structure on the east side of the lot, which Carberg (1986) speculates may have been a kitchen or shed (see Figure 19). The lot had been occupied since the 17th century. By the 1840s a house here was in use as rental property; it was divided into two units by 1860. After owner Theophilus Sanborn died in 1860, the brick house and lot was purchased by an Irish family, John and Michael Hurley.

Ownership became somewhat murky in the 1880s and 1890s, and the lack of extant census records makes it hard to trace. In 1895-96 the numbering of Derby Street lots shifted up, and 100 Derby Street was renumbered as 158-160 Derby St. By the end of the 19th century, the property was owned by Louis and Sarah Demofsky, Jewish immigrants who lived in South Salem; they subsequently sold to Walter and Anna Shapiro of Lawrence. The Shapiros sold the property to a Salem Polish family, the Pokorskis, in 1904, who soon sold it to Joseph Szczechowicz, a Salem leather worker and his wife, in 1905. Several members of the Szczechowicz family were active in the St. Joseph Society, although Joseph’s name does not appear in the 1906-1909 translation of the minutes. By 1904, the “Sons of Poland Hall” is listed at 162 Derby on the corner of Palfrey Street, a somewhat mysterious listing. It may be that this building was actually one of the several temporary spaces rented by the St. Joseph Society before 1906, or it may be that the space was also rented to a chapter of the Sons of Poland lodge, a different fraternal group whose national organization was founded in 1903. Joseph Szczechowicz still lived in the building at 162 Derby St. in 1906 when it provided a home to the St. Joseph’s Polish Beneficial Society and the St. Joseph’s Polish Band. The Szezechowiczses did not move out until 1907, after the sale of the property to the St. Joseph Society. See Edward Carberg, “The Sanborn Estate and the St. Joseph’s Society Building” (1986) in Carden, *St. Joseph Hall*, 185-196.



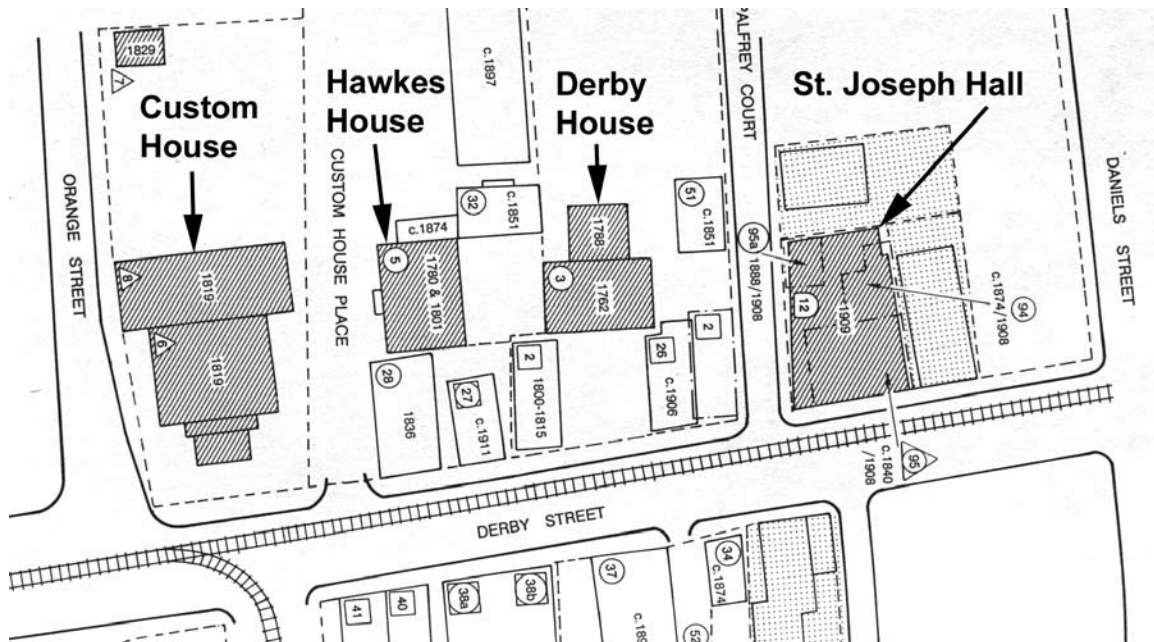


Figure 20 This composite map of the area around 160 Derby Street encompasses the years 1898-1911 and shows the footprint of the previous structures on the site as well as the St. Joseph Hall footprint. (Friedlander, "Historical Research")

were Wladyslaw Sobocinski and Teofil Bartnicki; at the December 2 meeting, it was these two men, along with an attorney, who explained to the membership the financial and legal arrangements relating to the purchase of the property, and Wladyslaw lent the Society \$100 (at 6% interest) to make up for a shortfall in the available funds for the purchase.

Wladyslaw, in his mid-forties, appears to have been well-established in Salem by this time. The Sobocinski family owned a three-family home at the foot of Daniels Street; Wladyslaw and Franciszka lived at the corner of Derby and Daniels Streets, just around the corner from the new St. Joseph Society's location. It seems that Wladyslaw's talents included a good head for figures; he had been elected Cashier (essentially the treasurer) of the Society in 1901 and was reelected to that post in 1908, having served as the Vice President in the interim. He was also later the treasurer of the Polish American Citizens Club. It also appears that Wladyslaw commanded considerable respect among his fellow immigrants. As the plans for constructing the new St. Joseph Hall progressed, there were clearly many tensions and disagreements, but Wladyslaw seems to have weathered them with authority. (The building committee "consisted of the brightest and the most capable members," the minutes note, "but not all worked well together.") In 1908, another member accused him of taking a bribe from the contractor, but it was his accuser who was replaced on the committee, suggesting that the others trusted in Wladyslaw's integrity.

Similarly, in what seems to have been an ongoing 1908 dispute with Society president Michal Leszczenski over some financial ambiguities, Wladyslaw remained in good standing while the president ended up being expelled.<sup>40</sup>

Teofil Bartnicki was another key figure in the early years of the St. Joseph Society and the Polish American community in Salem. He came to the U.S. in 1891 at the age of 16, then returned for a time to his home town of Zielun, in east-central Poland, where he apparently served in the Russian military. In 1900, he was back in Salem, this time to stay. In 1902, he married a woman from the German partition who, according to her granddaughter Linda Moustakis, spoke German and “was almost regarded as German instead of Polish.” Their wedding ceremony was conducted by Father Czubek at Immaculate Conception Church. Many Polish immigrants either wished to stay clear of contentious homeland politics in the U.S. or had never been involved with them in the first place, but it appears that Teofil was quite heavily involved and that he traveled back and forth between Salem and Poland on matters that seem to have had to do with politics, as well as becoming very active as a community leader on the local level. In Salem, he worked for a travel agency called Carmen Kimball as a translator and perhaps a courier of remittances from Poles in the U.S. to their families at home. According to Linda Moustakis:

He would travel with money. . . I don’t know if it was insurance or travel or what, but the people in Poland would deal with this agency. And my grandfather would travel over to Poland if the people here had money. . . And he was caught in the Bolshevik Revolution, and they kept him there for six months.<sup>41</sup> His cousin was poisoned. They had gone out to eat—these are stories from my mother, you know, handed down. But she does remember he went, they were all upset because he didn’t come back for six months. His cousin had been killed, really, poisoned, and he was ill himself from the same poisoning. And he finally made it back home.

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<sup>40</sup> At the Society’s January 3, 1909 meeting, held at Robaczewski Hall, Leszczenski was expelled from the society for an unspecified “treason” and “left the room while making some derogatory remarks.” The previous month, Michal Leszczenski II of Peabody—presumably the president’s son—had also been expelled for publicly criticizing the Society outside the meetings.

<sup>41</sup> This seems to have been during the Polish-Bolshevik War in 1920-21. Russia withdrew from World War I in March 1918 after the Bolshevik Revolution, but civil war continued in Russia and the territories of its former empire for several years after 1918. Lenin and the Bolsheviks saw Poland as an essential gateway to Europe, through which they hoped to assist other socialist revolutionary movements. Between 1919 and 1921, the new Polish republic allied with a short-lived Ukrainian republic against the Bolsheviks in a bloody and inconclusive conflict. At “The Miracle on the Vistula” in August 1920, Polish forces won a surprise victory over the Bolsheviks, an event that many Poles see as a victory against atheistic Bolsheviks which saved western Europe from being overrun by Communists. Lukowski and Zawadzki, *Concise History*, 221-25, 229.



Figure 21 Teofil and Anastasia Bartnicki on their wedding day, June 15, 1902. (Linda Moustakis)

Wladyslaw Sobocinski and Teofil Bartnicki were among the local leaders who were working energetically to create support mechanisms and structure for the complex immigrant community that was beginning to define itself in Salem. This was clearly a time of tremendous activity and change, with considerable numbers of new migrants arriving all the time, a new parish taking shape, the construction of the church and establishment of a school, and increased property ownership by immigrants who had previously only rented from established Irish, Yankee, and other landlords. The acquisition of their own property on Derby Street was undoubtedly a big step for the fledgling St. Joseph Society, still less than a decade old. But the existing structure at 160 Derby Street was too small for the various functions of the Society, particularly meetings and dances. Indeed, its growing membership was not always able to fit into what was now called the “club house,” and between the purchase of the property in 1906 and the opening of the new hall in 1909, some meetings continued to be held in various other locales, notably in “Robaczewski Hall” at the corner of Derby and Union Streets, one of the earliest gathering places for the St. Joseph Society a decade before. In April 1907, according to the minutes, “The matter of raising a new building/hall for the Society was discussed for the first time.”

The decision to pursue this idea seems to have been taken quite quickly, and the group set about raising money to construct a more useable hall. Like other cooperative and mutual assistance associations, the Society tapped its own members' collective resources as an important revenue source. In June 1908, the president asked each member to contribute five dollars, which would help to retire the existing mortgage, and members were again asked for funds—this time as loans rather than gifts, with amounts over \$100 eligible to receive 4% interest—in September. This effort raised \$640 from 50 members,<sup>42</sup> but the Society was a long way from the estimated \$12-15,000 it was likely to take to build the Hall they were envisioning. In addition to the storefront that had already been identified as a priority, they needed a sizeable space for meetings and dances, and it also seems that the idea of including rental apartments—again, for income, or as a part of the Society's mutual assistance mission, or both—was part of the vision for the building from the outset. There had clearly been hopes that both the builder and the church would help to finance the construction, but on November 1908, the project hit a snag:

On the subject of the new hall, it was reported that neither the priest at the Polish Church, nor Pitman Brown, the builder, were willing to risk signing a new loan for the hall construction. It was stated that if the Society had \$3,000 cash, it would be possible to get a loan for a smaller, wooden building with no apartments. The vote was taken to see if the majority agreed to a wooden structure. Most members did vote "yes" on the motion, approving the wooden construction for the building, but it was with a visible disappointment and complaints. So the matter was left for the further consideration of the committee.

The members of the committee appear to have been well-chosen for their connections or ability to make things happen, because just a month later they were able to report to the Society that both the priest and the builder had come through with the promised financing. The builder, Pitman Brown, was very local; the 1912 street directory shows the company located a few blocks west of the new Hall.<sup>43</sup> Demonstrating the importance of the priest's leadership in temporal as well as spiritual matters, Father Czubek had successfully negotiated a \$9,000 loan from the bank at 5% interest, while Pitman Brown, the builder, eventually agreed to a \$3,000 loan at 6%. Wladyslaw Sobocinski was chosen as the Society's financial overseer for the building project.

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<sup>42</sup> The minutes note four of the contributors: "W. [probably Walenty] Sobocienski \$10.00, T. Bartnicki \$10.00, Wl.[adyslaw] Sobocienski \$25.00 J. Pydynkowski II \$ 25.00."

<sup>43</sup> The listing shows "Pitman & Brown Co., carpenters and painters" at 249 Derby Street and "Pitman & Brown Co., doors, sash, etc." at 259 Derby.

At this point, the St. Joseph Society record book becomes largely silent on the details of the actual demolition of the old buildings and the construction of the Hall, which seems to have happened in a lightning-fast five months. In January 1909, the response to members who expressed a desire to join a more religiously-observant fraternal society was that the St. Joseph Society was presently preoccupied with its building project and its upcoming tenth anniversary, suggesting that practical matters were more to the forefront than spiritual ones for the group at this point. In February, the costs of moving the club were calculated at \$62. In May, some frustrations with the building process came to the surface—like all clients during a construction project, the Society had discovered that “There seemed to be many extra costs”!—leading to renewed accusations of collusion between the Society’s building committee and the builder, but these were quickly dismissed as unfounded.

In April, the organization adopted Teofil Bartnicki’s proposal to combine its tenth anniversary celebration with a grand opening of the new Hall. This gala event took place on May 31, 1909, with a dance (free for members) at Robaczewski Hall and a procession with invited guests from Polish fraternal societies from Lowell, Lawrence, Lynn, Peabody, and Ipswich, as well as other groups from Salem. Antoni [Alexander?] Kotarski supplied chairs free of charge, and barrels of beer were donated for the event, to be sold at five cents a glass.<sup>44</sup> The Society rented a number of horse-drawn carriages to meet guests at the train station and selected a welcoming committee, ticket-takers, parade marshals, and a special representative for their own group in the parade: a member named Wladyslaw Trojanowski (a man who had been removed from the building committee for questioning Wladyslaw Sobocinski’s honesty) riding on a horse. The bands of several societies participated.

There is little actual description of the opening celebration in the minutes, but it is easy to imagine that it was a festive and well-attended event, given the important role of the St. Joseph Society within the growing Polish enclave and the involvement of so many

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<sup>44</sup> It is not clear whether this is actually Alexander S. Kotarski (usually named in the minutes as “A.S. Kotarski”) or another man of the same family name. It seems likely that it was Alexander Kotarski, and that Teofil Bartnicki’s memory may have slipped when he was copying the minutes.

Some anecdotal evidence from our interviews suggests that making of both beer and liquor was a common practice among Salem’s Poles, and that some people in the community operated informal businesses selling beer and spirits that they had brewed or distilled. It seems likely that these donated barrels of beer represented contributions on the part of members who kept a barrel brewing in their kitchens.

other Polish organizations from the city and region. The Society held its first regular meeting in the new Hall on June 2, at which it chose tenants for the two apartments on the third floor and set the fees for rental of the Hall for dances, weddings, and other events.<sup>45</sup> The minutes' only mention of the grand opening was in the form of criticism of the president, Franciszek Karczewski, who had offended in a number of ways: sending an empty rather than a full barrel of beer to the celebration, locking the instruments of visiting musicians in a room and then leaving with the key before the evening was over, and holding "secret meetings" with "members of the National Union"—probably the Polish National Alliance, the more secular fraternal organization that was the main rival to the PRCUA in Polish America at that time. Invited to defend himself, Karczewski "denied any wrongdoing and left the meeting," only to be voted out *in absentia* and replaced.



Figure 22 St. Joseph Hall, 2008.

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<sup>45</sup> The minutes note: "One of the apartments was rented to Jozef Laskowski for \$19.00 a month. The second one had three candidates and Jan Kwiatkowski was finally selected to rent it for \$11.00 a month. Next, the prices for various functions were set: a dance from 7pm-11pm would cost \$12.00, from 3pm-11pm, \$15.00 with every extra hour charge of \$2.00. A theatrical [performance] would cost \$18 as would the weddings on Saturdays and Sundays. Any day time meeting would cost \$2.00 and in the evening, \$3.00." The Society also decided to pay a caretaker \$7 a week to look after the Hall and hired Franciszek Luzienski for this position.

Within a decade of the founding of the St. Joseph Society, it had accomplished two very significant projects: helping to establish a Polish church and erecting its own Hall. 1909 was a banner year in Polish Salem, with the “new” church on St. Peter Street and the new St. Joseph Hall opening within three months of each other. In a city and a neighborhood where most Poles were new arrivals struggling to find a place in a social and physical landscape already established by other groups—notably Yankees, Irish, and French Canadians—the three-story brick St. Joseph Hall made an important statement of the Polish presence and their intention of becoming a permanent part of the city.

The physical layout of the Hall reveals a good deal about the goals and operation of the Society. As already discussed, the rooms on the third floor represented not only income for the group but accommodation that could be rented to new immigrants. There were twelve rooms in all, divided into smaller units ranging from one room with a toilet to an apartment offering three connecting bed/living rooms, plus a toilet and a kitchen.<sup>46</sup> What amenities did Polish newcomers find when they arrived at these living quarters? The earliest occupants probably had gaslights; these were replaced with electric lighting probably in the 1920s. They had indoor plumbing—sinks and waterclosets—but no bathtubs. Radiators provided heat in all of the rooms. The floors were wooden, sometimes painted, and some areas covered with linoleum. Bedroom and living room walls were wallpapered or painted; wainscoting ringed kitchens and waterclosets.

Dorothy Stupakiewicz’s grandfather moved from Newburyport to Salem with his family; when they arrived, the entire family of seven, including five teenagers, moved into St. Joseph Hall. They lived here on the third floor for some time before moving to Danvers. Dorothy’s father and his brother Henry most likely worked as caretakers at St. Joseph Hall, to help pay their rent. Dorothy’s father worked as a bartender on the Hall’s lower floor. Alice Zujewski reported that her sister recalled some families who lived on the third floor, including one headed by Boleslaw Staniewicz and one by Bernard Kaminski. Kaminski was at one time the president of the St. Joseph Society, and lived for a time at the Hall with his wife and two sons. Alice’s husband also remembered a single man named Robert Jaworski who lived on the third floor.

The 1910 census notes that a portion of the property was considered to be a boarding house. The keeper of this establishment was a 55-year-old Russian Polish widow named Mary Tabuski, and the household listed in the census included her sons Joseph

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<sup>46</sup> Carden, *St. Joseph Hall*, 21-22, 83-84.

(18) and John (15), a nine-year-old grandchild, and six boarders: Helen Barszwski, Edam Basebwer, Francyskia Klaska, Teojoyl and Teajyla Renkaski, and Alexander Waleves. The three male and three female boarders were all listed as Russian or German Poles; all were young (between 18 and 30 years of age) and all worked either in leather factories or mills.<sup>47</sup>

Research for this study turned up little other definite information about the early occupants of these apartments, and so it is difficult to say to what extent these spaces served the purpose of offering a landing-place for newcomers who, in the words already quoted from Wanda Walczak's account of the neighborhood, wanted to "be with their own people, just until they got settled." Further examination of census records and translation of the remainder of the St. Joseph Society minutes would provide more information about how often tenants moved into and out of the apartments, but considerable research would be needed to determine how the occupancy patterns of the third floor rooms related to tenants' dates of arrival and eventual settlement in the U.S. or return to Poland.

The large room on the second floor provided the Society with the social space it had wanted for meetings, dances, weddings, and other gatherings. Chapter Six will include community members' memories of attending events at this and other Polish halls in the Derby Street neighborhood. In this chapter's discussion of the early decades of the twentieth century, we will just note three aspects of the Society's activities that relate to its public and ceremonial functions: the band, the drill team (or "Hussars"), and sports teams.

Like most fraternal and mutual assistance organizations, the St. Joseph Society made considerable use of music, ceremony, and ritual in its meetings and activities. The Society established its own marching band early on, in 1904. The leader was paid \$100 towards lessons priced at \$4 an hour. Members contributed towards their lessons and purchase of their instruments. Band membership was a serious duty and members were closely supervised by the Society. The band was expected to play for free for the first five processions of the Society; thereafter the Society paid a fee for the band's services. In addition, the band could play at banquets and for outside events such as those sponsored by other Polish societies and churches. The band seemed to be a source of both pride and friction in the Society. In 1906, the band boycotted a Society function in protest of new

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<sup>47</sup> Friedlander, "Historical Research," 144. The boardinghouse portion of the property was recorded in various ways in the census data, as 160-162 or 158-162 Derby Street.



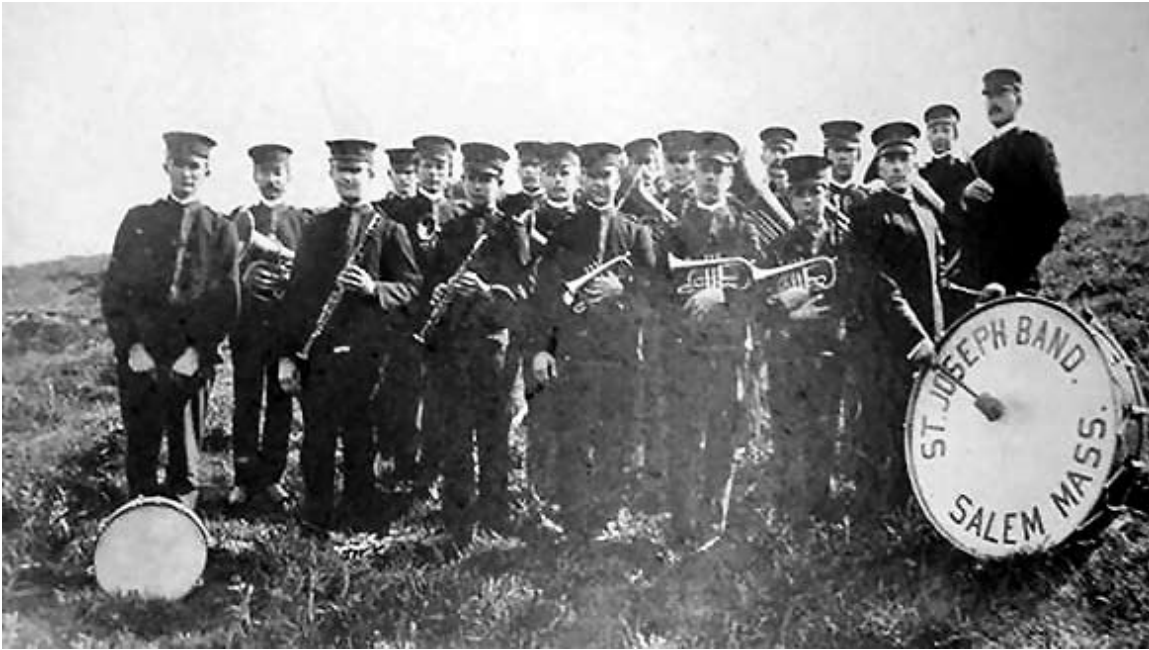


Figure 23 Undated photo of the St. Joseph Society band. (Salem Maritime NHS)

stricter rules. Band members appeared to be among those who were sometimes found to be intoxicated at events, and the fact that the band had become unionized by 1909 also posed problems when the St. Joseph Society participated at events—like the opening of their own hall in 1909—where non-union bands were also performing. It is not known how long the Society sponsored the band.

In addition to its marching band, the Society also sponsored a paramilitary drill team starting in 1908. The Society's record book notes, "The members encouraged the formation of such a unit as they existed in other organizations, Polish Falcon for example."<sup>48</sup> It seems possible that this addition to the Society's activities was spearheaded in large part by Teofil Bartnicki, who briefly served as the President in 1906. The brevity of Bartnicki's tenure as President—he was elected in January of 1906 but resigned six months later, for reasons not explained in what are probably his own hand-written notes about the organization—suggests that he may also have been someone with strong ideas about how things should be run, and that this sometimes caused tensions in the Society. Linda Moustakis's photo collection shows many views of him wearing

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<sup>48</sup> Tadius Sadoski, one of John Frayler's respondents in his 2002 survey of people associated with Salem's Polish neighborhood, recollected a group of "Hussars" associated with the St. Joseph Society.



Figure 24 Paramilitary drill team or “Hussars” of the St. Joseph Society, undated. (Linda Moustakis)

his paramilitary uniform (for example, Figure 24). His erect bearing and meticulous grooming convey a fierce sense of pride and dignity; he seems to be taking the group rather more seriously than his fellow members do. According to materials in Linda Moustakis’s collection, the St. Joseph drill team was in existence between 1907 and 1921.

Like many of the other Polish clubs, the St. Joseph Society also sponsored athletic activities, particularly baseball and basketball. The St. Joseph Society baseball teams were an institution for many years; some elderly members of the community recalled them traveling out of the region to play in national tournaments sponsored by the PRCUA.

Apparently, Polish ancestry was not a firm requirement for team membership. Mary Nowak, who grew up in the Derby Street neighborhood in the 1910s and 1920s, recalled an African American who also lived in the neighborhood and played for the team:

He was one of us. And he belonged to the baseball team. We’d go down to Rowell’s Field, which isn’t there anymore, and the Polish came from Ipswich, a Polish team. They’re all lined up, who’s going to be first man, first baseman or whatever you call it. It comes to Albert Moses—they don’t want Albert Moses. They don’t want



Figure 25 St. Joseph Society baseball team, 1930. (Linda Moustakis)

SCORE CARD												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	R	H	E
St. Joseph												
Visitor												
Patronize												
<b>JOHN KARBOWNICZAK</b>												
Furniture and Coal												
155 Derby St.				Tel. 1198				Salem, Mass.				

Figure 26 Score card for a St. Joseph Society home baseball game, sponsored by local merchant John Karbowniczak, whose business was across the street from the Hall. (Salem Maritime NHS)

Albert because he's black. Well, we can't help it—he's one of our best players. He's been on the team since he was a kid! And this and that—he's one of us. "No, no, no," they're running around, time is running short, the bleachers are full of people, what's going on, what's going on. Finally somebody said that Moses was a Christian and he was, his name was Moseshowsky. So help me God, they gave him that name, the game went on!

The St. Joseph Society was one among many fraternal and mutual assistance groups in Salem's Polish community; some of the others are described in Appendix F. Because of its longevity, its crucial role in the founding of the city's Polish parish, and the uniqueness of its Hall as a place built by Poles for Poles, though, the St. Joseph Society was in some ways a "first among equals." It played a great number of important roles during the decades when immigrant Poles were establishing themselves in Salem: religious organization, welcoming committee, gathering place, retail and residential space, sponsor of recreational and ceremonial activities, and much more. As we will see in Chapter Five, it was one of the parent organizations of the Polish American Citizens Club, which supported Poles as they asserted themselves in the political realm. And through its insurance and other financial benefits and its role as a commercial landlord, it was also a vital part of the economic life of the community that had created it. The next chapter will examine those financial aspects of the Society, along with the larger topic of work and economic life in Polish Salem in the early twentieth century.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### ECONOMIC LIFE IN POLISH SALEM, 1899-1939

Industrial jobs for immigrants were plentiful in Salem and other New England mill towns, but the industrial economy offered its own hazards and uncertainties. The translated minutes of the St. Joseph Society's early years show that in addition to its many other functions, the organization helped to provide something of a social safety net in an era before the establishment of the welfare state. This chapter will begin by examining how the Society supported its members through its insurance programs, and will then move outward to explore some other facets of the economic life of the Polish community in the Derby Street area, from the many small Polish-run businesses to the large and small factories where many of the immigrants found work. The chapter will focus on the first three decades of the twentieth century, roughly from the founding of the St. Joseph Society in 1899 to the eve of the Second World War in 1938.

#### Mutual Assistance in Action

Like many other fraternal and community organizations, the St. Joseph Society offered life and health insurance benefits to its members. Life insurance—and with it, the promise of a dignified burial—was an appealing feature of membership in mutual assistance organizations for many people in the U.S. in this period. The Polish National Alliance offered insurance for its members before its rival, the PRCUA, but the PRCUA quickly recognized the appeal of financial mutual aid and began offering insurance policies in 1886. By 1897, members could choose from policies in the amounts of \$250, \$500, \$750, or \$1000, with their assessments being based on their age and the amount of the policy. A 24-year-old paid 24 cents a month for a \$250 policy, while a 45-year-old paid twice as much.<sup>1</sup> In 1919, as part of its outreach to Polish youth and its attempt to compete with insurance programs offered by other fraternal organizations, the PRCUA began offering youth insurance policies as well.<sup>2</sup> As seen in Chapter Two, the Salem St. Joseph Society became a chapter of the PRCUA in 1912; translation of more of the Society's minutes might indicate whether the availability of insurance through the PRCUA was one reason for joining the national organization.

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<sup>1</sup> Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 74-75.

<sup>2</sup> Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 179-80.

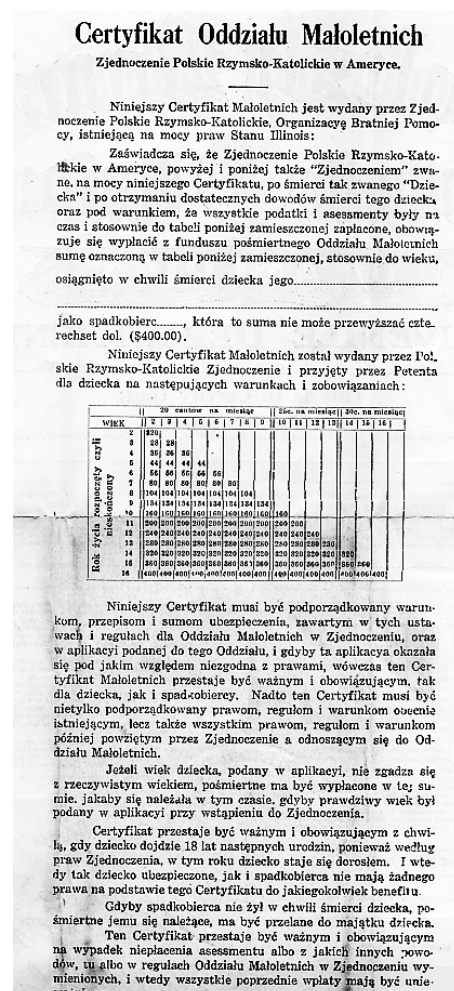


Figure 27 Insurance policy certificate from the PRCUA's Youth Department. (Salem Maritime NHS)

The St. Joseph Society, like many other fraternal groups, also offered health benefits. Also like many other groups, it restricted this benefit to adult men who were presumed to be their families' main source of support; in order to be insured by the PRCUA, members had to be under the age of 45 and certified in good health by a doctor.<sup>3</sup> Before the 1920s, doctors were often retained by mutual assistance associations to provide services at a set price for members, although the medical establishment opposed this practice because it went outside their own negotiated fees for services; as doctors became increasingly professionalized and powerful in the early twentieth century, "lodge practices" declined sharply.<sup>4</sup> Society dues (originally \$1, quickly raised to \$1.25) went

<sup>3</sup> Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 73.

<sup>4</sup>Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State*, 128.

into a fund that members and their families could tap to pay doctor's bills or funeral expenses. In 1902, the St. Joseph Society minutes report that the sick benefit was paid out nearly every month for one or two members, typically in amounts of \$5 or \$10 (something approximating a week's salary). In 1908, the society paid out a total of \$200 in sick benefits.

As with other mutual assistance associations that offered sick benefits, there was sometimes debate about how to certify a member's illness and recovery. In 1909, the minutes note, "The sick benefit was paid out to Latorski but there was insufficient information on whether he was still ill. The benefit payment to Jan Karbowniczak was delayed until the physician's report." Later that year, the rules were changed so that no benefits were paid for the first week of sickness except for those who were away from work for four or more weeks. In one quarter of 1909, payments from the sick fund totaled \$165, showing that this represented a rising drain on the society's resources.

In March 1907, the society contracted with a Dr. Field to become its regular doctor. Field agreed to visit members for 50 cents per visit, but refused to extend the same rate to members' children, "stating that it would ruin his reputation among his peers"—a reflection of the debates going on in the medical profession about "lodge practices." It was settled that Field would charge \$1 for a first visit to a member's child and less for subsequent visits, and that members could opt to keep their own doctors if they wished, but that they could only receive sick benefits from the society if they used Dr. Field.

Poles also doctored and healed one another. The first Polish doctor in Salem was Alexander Kotarski's son, Dr. Louis Kotarski. The second was Dr. Zielinski, who was, according to Mary Nowak, "considered a big shot amongst the Polish people, because everybody said, 'See? He had more education [than Kotarski]!'" Although many people accessed health benefits through their membership in the mutual assistance organizations, there were often reasons (aside from obvious considerations of language) why they preferred someone familiar with their own community. Mary Nowak spoke about her brother-in-law, a doctor in Fall River, Massachusetts, who "got pretty famous" because he was the only Polish doctor in the city:

When he went to the patient and the woman was taking money out of a—they used to have on the door, an envelope, the insurance man was coming once a month, and they would save the money in there. And when the doctor was ready to leave, she went to get the money, she'd take it out there—he knew what that money was.



He wouldn't take it. That's when he got very famous, because they says, "Ooh, try him—he won't take money!"

Doctors sometimes also seem to have accepted barter arrangements with their patients, as in the case of Mary Nowak's father. He was known for nurturing litters of puppies instead of drowning them as many people did, and once when he was sick and called the doctor for a house visit, the family's bathtub was filled with old shirts and the newest litter of puppies. When the doctor was ready to leave, Mary's father said to him, "Me no got money. Me got dogs!" He knew the doctor had a young son, and pointed out, "You got boy. Boy like doggie. I pay you doggie!" The doctor left with the puppy of his choice as payment for the visit.

However, medical doctors were by no means the only healers in Salem's Polonia. Like many people from rural cultures, Poles from peasant backgrounds brought with them a deep tradition of folk medicine and healing, of which women were apparently the main practitioners. They were active as midwives until the mid-twentieth century; Helen Zand reports that midwives often greatly outnumbered doctors in early Polish American communities, and that birth was a social affair attended by many women.<sup>5</sup> Poles in Salem also used folk remedies for many illnesses. Mary Nowak recalls that many people had family members in Poland send them the medicines they were familiar with, rather than relying on strange American medicines. Mary's mother bought cheap bottles of vinegar for her migraine headaches and soaked a towel in it to wrap around her head; Linda Moustakis remembers that "ginger brandy was a cure for every ailment!" Dorothy Stupakiewicz related that the cure for a sick stomach or a headache in her family was to take a shirt that her father had worn and wave it in front of the patient's face, while pretending to spit to one side for ten or fifteen minutes. The pantomime of spitting was supposed to draw the evil out of the patient's system. Dorothy also recalls her grandmother giving her a mustard plaster when she had pneumonia: "I had the reddest skin in town, I was redder than a lobster. But it cured me. And I've never had pneumonia since."

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<sup>5</sup> Obidinski and Zand, *Polish Folkways in America*, 35, 97. Several interviewees in this study mentioned having been born at home or knowing about the presence of midwives in the community. Ron Potorski, for example, noted that his mother always went home to her mother's house when it was time to give birth. "All my aunts went there to have their babies. . . I guess between [my grandmother] and my other aunts, you know, they all got together and whoever was ready to have the baby, they'd take care of them." Mary Nowak recalls women boiling big pots and pans of water on the stove, and children being kept out of the kitchen—the only communal gathering-place in houses where every room was used as a bedroom—while a birth was being attended.

Members of mutual assistance associations were also entitled to death benefits, which were usually designed to cover funeral expenses. A conflict within the St. Joseph Society in early 1909 shows one debate over the extent to which society members were responsible for one another. A new member, Jan Przybysiewski, had died in an accident at work on January 13, and there was disagreement about whether, as a recent member, he was owed the death benefit. It was decided that the society should levy its usual \$1 per member charge to pay for the funeral, with any additional funds being sent to Przybysiewski's mother and younger siblings in central Poland, whom he supported. Members were also required to attend the funeral unless they had pressing reasons not to be there. However, it appears that some members were unwilling to contribute time and money to someone whom they probably did not know very well. In February, those who were more than two weeks late in contributing to the death benefit for Przybysiewski were fined an additional 50 cents, and one member was expelled for his refusal to contribute. The handwritten records of the Society's meetings record that when Jan and Jakub Malski protested the assessment, "they were reminded of the free music lessons they received from the Society." The funeral costs of \$180 were covered and an additional \$68 sent via the priest to Przybysiewski's mother. In a similar incident in 1904, the widow of Jan Szczechowicz was paid a death benefit of \$75, even though her husband had joined the Society only four months earlier. In this case, though, the Szczechowicz family was more involved in the Society—various members were part of the hall construction and opening celebration committees later in the decade—and Jan was presumably seen to be more fully a part of the organization and the community. This was the principle of mutuality in action: members would look out for one another's interests, within an atmosphere of constant social testing about who belonged and who did not.

### **"A Little Town": Derby Street as Salem's Polish Main Street (1912)**

In the early twentieth century, streetcars connected Salem's neighborhoods to one another and to nearby towns, including Peabody, Beverly, and other places where Poles worked in the shoe, leather, and other industries. The Polish community and the Derby Street neighborhood were therefore by no means isolated from the rest of the city or the surrounding area. Yet a very striking feature of Polish Salem in the early twentieth century was how comparatively self-contained it was, with many people working, socializing, and shopping within a few blocks of where they lived. This was not unique

to Poles in Salem, and in part it reflects the much more localized existence that most Americans lived in the era before widespread automobile travel reshaped many patterns of mobility and work life. Particularly for Poles who lived in Salem's Ward One, however, life could be very local indeed. "Derby Street was just like a little town," recalled Wanda Walczak, who grew up in the original Sobocinski family home, a triple-decker at the foot of Daniels Street. "You didn't have to get off Derby Street to buy anything—you had everything on Derby Street."

One of the things that made the Derby Street neighborhood so strikingly self-contained was that residential, commercial, and industrial properties were interspersed throughout its streets. All along the waterfront, particularly in the area around Derby and Central Wharves, were warehouses and supply companies selling coal, flour, grain, and other provisions which were transported by boat and increasingly by rail. The smaller, closely-packed buildings typical of New England maritime neighborhoods housed small businesses and local organizations on their ground floors, often with apartments on the upper levels. A person walking from east to west along Derby Street in 1912 would have seen evidence of the rapid changes taking place as the neighborhood became more heavily Polish; there were Irish and Yankee names on some of the businesses, but more and more businesses owned by recent Polish Catholic immigrants were appearing as well.<sup>6</sup> Toward the eastern end of Derby Street, many small grocery stores, bakeries, and other businesses served the immigrant communities. Selinski and Kramer Bakery could be found at 96 Derby, while there were several Polish groceries—Sokol's at 99, Buba's at 90 Derby, and the Rybicki Brothers' grocery at 82, on the corner of Becket Street. In 1912, the Salem street directory listed the Polish Naturalization Club at 80 Derby Street, perhaps a reflection of the Rybicki family's longstanding involvement in political affairs in Salem's Polish community; we will encounter this club and what was probably its successor, the Polish American Citizens' Club, again in the next chapter. The pedestrian might have heard the clanging of a bell as a trolley car came along the street to or from the Salem Willows at the

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<sup>6</sup> 1912 was useful as a sample year in part because of the availability of a street atlas for the previous year, and in part because it reflects the area in the year before Polish immigration peaked and two years before the Salem Fire that drastically changed the western end of the Derby Street neighborhood. Our survey of the Salem street directories, which examined selected streets at five-year intervals, showed that the neighborhood was still quite ethnically mixed but clearly becoming more heavily Polish by 1912. Unless otherwise noted, information about Derby Street in 1912 is taken from Edward Carberg's "Rediscovering Salem Polonia" tour, from the Salem city directory for that year, and from general anecdotal information from interviews about the early days of Polish Salem.

eastern end of the tracks; the trolley line had been a fixture in the neighborhood since 1875, with electric cars replacing the older horse-drawn ones in 1888.<sup>7</sup>

Continuing westward, the 1912 pedestrian would have passed an imposing three-story brick mansion on the northwest corner of Turner Street. Built in 1806 by Joseph Waters, by the early twentieth century it had become the Bertram Home for Aged Men, an example of Yankee philanthropy in the midst of an increasingly diverse ethnic neighborhood.<sup>8</sup> Mary Nowak, who came to Salem as a small child in 1913, recalled seeing the residents of the “Old Men Home,” remembering that “we used to come by from school, and we used to wave to them.” The fortune that supported the Bertram Home originated with maritime merchant John Bertram, who also gave money to endow the Salem Hospital at the western end of Derby Street. By 1912, Bertram’s granddaughter, Caroline Emmerton, was already hard at work transforming the foot of Turner Street into a combined colonial-era historic compound and a settlement house dedicated to the education and welfare of the Irish, Polish, and other immigrant populations who had settled in Salem, particularly in Ward 1. An influential figure in the world of Salem philanthropy, Emmerton founded the House of Seven Gables Settlement Association in 1907, and began to hold craft, dancing, and gymnastic classes the following year in an old Seamen’s Bethel next to the waterfront.<sup>9</sup> (The history of the Polish community and the House of Seven Gables Settlement Association will be explored in more detail in Chapter Six.) The brick building housing the “Old Men’s Home” in 1912 would later become a part of Polish Salem when it was bought by one of the mutual assistance organizations and further modified as a function hall and meeting space (see Appendix F).

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<sup>7</sup> The Salem Street Railroad Company was reorganized in 1875 as the Naumkeag Street Railway Company, and subsequently extended its routes out to the summer resort area, Salem Willows, at the end of Salem Neck. In 1888, electric-powered trolley cars replaced the older horsedrawn cars. Four years later, the Lynn and Boston Railroad Company bought the street railway company, connecting Salem with 17 other cities and towns and moving citizens to suburbs and towns along its route—Beverly, Danvers, Peabody, Marblehead. Steamboat transportation to Boston began in 1890, but by 1906 the railroad ran their first cars from Salem to Boston. MHC, “Reconnaissance Survey,” 30.

<sup>8</sup> Tolles, *Architecture in Salem*, 47.

<sup>9</sup> “Famous Old House For Settlement Work,” *Salem Evening News*, July 10, 1908, Folder RMS/HIS, Box 31 Oral Histories 1978, House of Seven Gables Archives; Caroline Emmerton, *The Chronicles of Three Old Houses* (Boston: Thomas Todd Co., 1935), 30.

As the pedestrian approached St. Joseph Hall, the shops would have continued to reflect the ethnic mix in the neighborhood at that time. A grocer named Wlodyka<sup>10</sup> at 143 and a shoe repairman named Winer at 141 faced a hairdresser named Duggan at 142. A little farther east, a plumber named William Joyce at 134 was located opposite Cohen's variety store at 133. At the northeast corner of Derby and Bentley Streets was a small wooden firehouse that would shortly become a venue for many Polish American cultural groups and activities; in 1912, it was still an active engine house.<sup>11</sup> Next door to the firehouse was Witkos grocery store, one of the small Polish groceries that would endure into the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup>

Approaching St. Joseph Hall from the east, the walker in 1912 would see that the St. Joseph Society had quickly realized its plan of renting out storefront space on its ground floor. In April 1909, as construction of the Hall was being completed, Marcin Witkos suggested that a clothing store would be a good use of the first floor.<sup>13</sup> This proposal seems to have been acted on quickly: Hurwitz Dry Goods was a tenant in the early years of the hall's existence (1910-1920). (See Appendix E for a list of the occupants of St. Joseph Hall.) In addition, there were more social or recreational businesses in the Hall in its early years. In 1912, a pool room run by W. Szczechowicz occupied part of the storefront space.

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<sup>10</sup>This is listed as Woldyka in the street directory.

<sup>11</sup> The 1912 street directory lists this as "Vet. Fireman Assn. Engine House"; the address is 128 Derby Street.

<sup>12</sup> Marcin Witkos joined and was elected treasurer at the founding of the St. Joseph Society in 1899. He was also part of the hall construction committee, among other functions. In 1902, the store at 126 Derby Street was operated by Miss B. T. Hoar, and two other names—Thomas Shields and Mrs. Mary J. Riley—are listed in the street directory, probably tenants in the upstairs apartments. By 1908, the space was occupied by Halko and Lesiuk, printers, with three additional names listed: M. Halko, M. Witkos, and W. Drabik, suggesting that perhaps M. Witkos (most likely the Marcin Witkos who was an early and active member of the St. Joseph Society) lived in the building by that date. By 1912, Witkos had opened his own store, which remained a fixture on Derby Street for many years. In 1912, the additional names on the street listing for 126 Derby Street were J. Chmielewsky and A. Skunceck.

<sup>13</sup> There were originally two commercial spaces on the ground floor of the building. The 1909 St. Joseph Society minutes note that Wladyslaw Sobocinski rented "the smaller store located in the new building" for \$25 a month with a three-year lease," and the 1909 street directory shows a lunchroom in the name of William (probably Wladyslaw) Sobocinski. Members of the Sobocinski family owned several food businesses in the neighborhood over time, including W. Soboczinski and Sons Provisions at 109 Derby Street and Felix Soboczinski's restaurant at 212 Derby Street.

Szczechowicz's pool hall was one of many along Derby Street. A rival establishment stood across the street at 167-69, at the head of Derby Wharf, where Alexander Kotarski and his French Canadian wife Clara owned a block of buildings. Kotarski was the immigrant from Warsaw who had been instrumental in the first attempt to establish the St. Joseph Society in 1897. Although he was expelled from the Society in 1900, apparently for refusing to take its religious practices seriously enough, he remained a very important personage in Polish Salem. In 1911, the year before our imagined 1912 walk along Derby Street, he was described in a Salem Evening News article as the "King of the Poles" in the city, a recognized leader in the immigrant community.<sup>14</sup>



Figure 28 167-169 Derby Street, the four-story brick building on the left, built around 1906 and seen here shortly before demolition c. 1938, was owned by Alexander and Clara Kotarski, who also owned the wooden buildings to the right. (Salem Maritime NHS)

The row of four wooden buildings between St. Joseph Hall and the Custom House is worth examining in some detail (see Figure 20). In 1912, these obscured the view of the older Hawkes House (1780/1801) and Derby House (1762/1788) from the street. At 174 Derby, the 1836 structure at the corner of Custom House Court, was a grocery store run

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<sup>14</sup> The article also notes that Kotarski went first to Pennsylvania when he immigrated, then to Connecticut, where he worked on a Polish newspaper, suggesting that he was a well-educated man who participated in the active Polish press in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. ("Remarkable Progress of Poles in Salem," Salem Evening News, n.d. [1911?], House of Seven Gables Newsclippings 1909-April 1950, Box 1, News Clippings Scrapbook 1910-1916)

by a proprietor listed with an Irish name, Gorman, in the street directory. According to Edward Carberg's recollection of stories told by older people in the community, this was more likely a Polish Jew named Grohman, known in the neighborhood for having extra fingers on one of his hands. The property was by then owned by Herman Tyburc, who had immigrated from Austrian Poland in 1886 (see Chapter Two).<sup>15</sup> Just east of that, in a much newer building at 172, was Isidore Alpers' men's wear store, which had been in that location for several years.<sup>16</sup> Next to Alpers' store was a small building that had originally been the West India Goods Store at the corner of Derby Street and Palfrey Court, built between 1800 and 1815. This was used as a liquor store between 1881 and 1891. In 1911 it was moved slightly west to stand in front of the Derby House; in 1912, it was being used as a pool hall run by a Pole named A. Potorski.<sup>17</sup> And just across Palfrey Court from St. Joseph Hall, at 164 Derby, was Joseph Kohn's grocery store. Because we have an unusual amount of documentation of this building and the people who lived in it, and because they reveal how Poles were reinventing themselves in America while often remaining connected to homeland culture and politics, it is worth pausing briefly to look more closely at this site.

Joseph Kohn was a widower with two small daughters when he purchased the Derby House property in 1911. Like many young Polish men, he had come to the U.S. in part because he was seeking to avoid conscription—in this case, according to his second wife Hedwiga (Harriet), conscription into the Russian army. He had an older brother who had already migrated to Salem and sent money home, and Hedwiga related that Joe followed the same route:

When they got to a certain age, the Russians were taking all the young Polish boys to join their army. And when he knew that he was going to be picked, he got into a wagon, one of those farmers' wagons loaded with hay. And he hid under the hay.

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<sup>15</sup> This building can be seen in a photo reproduced in Friedlander, "Historical Research," p. 105 (Plate IV.3).

<sup>16</sup> The street directories show Alpers' store being located here in 1908; in 1901-2, Dennis Deasey is listed at this location. Friedlander notes that the building at 172 Derby Street was constructed c. 1911, so there is a discrepancy to be resolved here. Carberg spells Alpers' first name as Isidore, while the city street directories list him as Isadore.

<sup>17</sup> Information about the West India Goods Store is from Friedlander, "Historical Research," pp. 211, 219. In the 1908 Salem street directory listing, the building is shown as being vacant.



Figure 29 Joseph and Hedwiga (Harriet) Kohn. (Francis Kulik)

And every border they come to, they'd stick pitchforks through to see if anybody was there. And they just laid in that hay. Most of them traveled that way to get out of the boundary lines.

Joe had been trained as a shoemaker in an industrial school—"He could make shoes, beautiful shoes, all by hand," his wife recalled in 1978. He found work in a shoe shop in Salem, but aspired to do more. Once he had saved some money, he acquired a horse and wagon and bought fruit and vegetables from New Hampshire to sell in Salem. Eventually he made enough to open a store, and established a grocery business which moved to several addresses during his ownership. His first store was located at 173 Derby Street, appearing in the city directory in 1906. After he bought the Derby House property in 1911, he erected a new building with two storefronts and an apartment above it (see Figure 30). The western or left storefront became a liquor store that became known as the "Bunghole." On the right was Kohn's own *Polska Grocernia* (Polish Grocery Store).<sup>18</sup>

Having relocated his business and constructed a brand new dwelling for himself and his two young daughters, Kohn remarried in 1913. In the recollection of his neighbor, Mary Nowak, Joe Kohn was "a big shot" in Salem's Polonia. "Joe Kohn always was dressed up when he came into the store. . . He was *szlachta!*"—aristocracy. His business success and property ownership clearly gave him an elevated status in the

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<sup>18</sup> Friedlander, "Historical Research," 76 (Table III.9), 85, 91-92.





Figure 30 164-166 Derby Street in the late 1930s, with Joseph Kohn's store on the right. (Francis Kulik)

community. But with his second marriage, he also married into the Polish American elite—"I think that's when he became *szlachta*," Mary recalled. His wife was from the well-to-do Boston suburb of Newton, and her father, Jan Romaszkievicz, was extremely active in regional and national Polish American affairs. Born in 1873, he was just a few years older than Kohn. Romaszkievicz had come to the U.S. as a teenager, went to business school in Boston, and worked in banking.<sup>19</sup> His occupation, and the fact that his daughter remembers her mother driving her father to work in the family's carriage when they lived in the Boston suburb of Dover, confirms Mary Nowak's assessment of the family as *szlachta*—members of an elite class of Poles.

Like other bankers, including John Zarembski in Salem, who will appear later in this chapter, Romaszkievicz seems to have acted as a go-between for new immigrants, meeting them at the dock and helping them to get to their families or to a place where they could find work. Sometimes the Romaszkievicz household, like others of well-to-do or well-established Poles, became a temporary stop for new arrivals. Romaszkievicz

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<sup>19</sup> Pienkos, *PNA*, 390.

joined the Polish National Alliance in 1893, and quickly became very active in the organization. The minutes of the St. Joseph Society for December 1908 note that a letter was received from him thanking the Salem group for its participation in a Boston event. According to his daughter, he—along with his son-in-law Joseph Kohn—helped to establish Group 555 of the PNA in Salem and eventually rose to become national president between 1927 and 1939.<sup>20</sup>

Hedwiga first met her future husband when she was just a teenager and he attended a Boston event where she was reciting a laboriously-learned poem by Polish national poet Adam Mickiewicz. He saw her again—and seems to have become smitten—at a Polish Falcons event when she was demonstrating her athletic skill:

I could jump the hurdles, and I could do most anything, shimmy up the wall, you know, the ladder. So they noticed that I was graceful in gymnastics. So I had to get out and show them how to do it first and then they all did, repeated what I did. My husband was there that time. Well, from that day on he never left me alone. And I was 17 when I got married. . . My dad had to come to Salem to sign my marriage license!

After the wedding, Hedwiga settled into the new home above the stores Joe Kohn had built at 166 Derby Street. The Kohns represented a new generation of leadership in Polish America that combined self-made wealth with inherited status. Hedwiga's family's background, along with Joe's business success, made them quite different from the owners of other "Mom and Pop" grocery stores along Derby Street. Through the Romaszkiewicz, the couple were connected with regional, national, and even transnational Polish American politics and culture. In her 1978 interview, Mrs. Kohn recalled meeting Ignacy Paderewski, the celebrated Polish pianist and leader of the

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<sup>20</sup> He was part of the progressive wing of the PNA, which was embroiled at that time in an internal struggle with more conservative members who were beginning to turn against the socialist-led government of Józef Piłsudski in the interwar Polish Republic (Pienkos, *PNA*, 390-91). Romaszkiewicz's central achievement while in office was to establish a scouting movement within the PNA. Known as *Harcerstwo*, the Polish term for scouting, this movement drew on the kinds of idealistic and nationalistic imagery that informed the Polish Falcons in Poland and America before the First World War; its central goal was to promote Polish ethnic identification through language and cultural activities. About 52,000 scouts were enrolled at the height of the program's success in America, but like similar ethnic scouting programs, it eventually foundered due to increasingly Americanization of young people by the time of World War II and the deep opposition of the American scouting movement, which saw itself as the natural umbrella organization for all such projects (Pienkos, *PNA*, 147, 232). As the PNA scouting program was faltering, so was the leftist viewpoint that Romaszkiewicz held within the PNA, and he was defeated in his last bid for national office in 1939, ten years before his death (Pienkos *PNA*, 391).

conservative faction of the exiles before World War I. She also spoke about her father's role in placing a statue of Kosciusko—the kind of project the PNA was frequently involved in—in the Boston Public Garden in 1927.<sup>21</sup> As a young bride, she traveled to Poland just after World War I and had tea with Josef Pilsudski, the President—hardly a typical experience for a second-generation Polish immigrant in America!

Farther west from the Derby Wharf area where the Kohns' store and house were located, warehouses and factories began to outnumber stores and apartments. Dominating the shoreline at this end of the street were the immense buildings of the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company (Figure 31). At 184 Derby, at the foot of Herbert Street, a bicycle repairman named J. Smidt (possibly Schmidt) suggests an immigrant from German territory. At 207 Derby, a Polish hairdresser, R. Kulakowski, may have been a member of the Kulakowski family who assisted some of the earliest Polish arrivals in Salem, including Felix Sobocinski. In Piotr Robaczewski's building—known

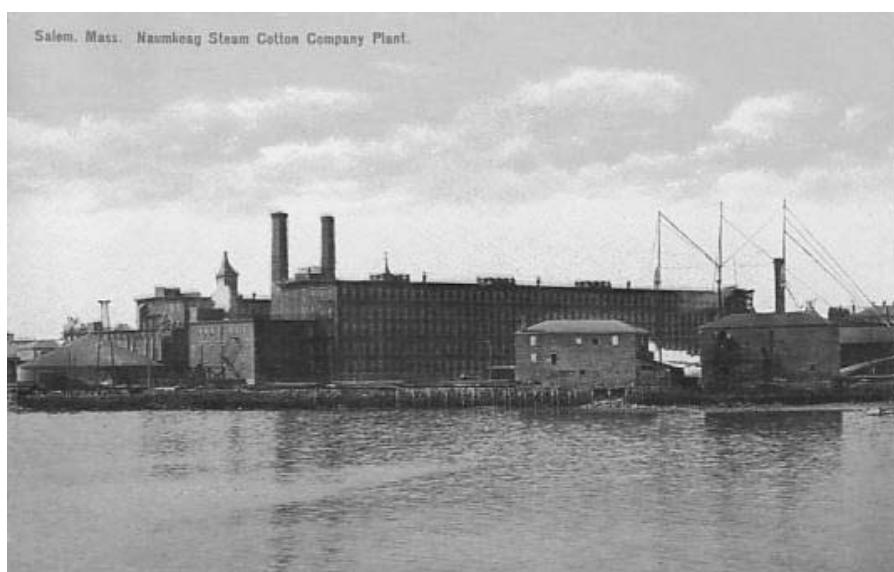


Figure 31 The Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company before the 1914 fire, from a c. 1910 postcard. (Public domain image from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Naumkeag\\_Steam\\_Cotton\\_Company.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Naumkeag_Steam_Cotton_Company.jpg))

as “Robaczewski Hall”—at the southeast corner of Derby and Union Streets, there was a Polish drug store in addition to the meeting hall that had been used by the St. Joseph Society in its early days (see Figure 9). Across Union Street was a hairdresser named Levesque, evidence of the fact that this western end of Derby Street abutted the French Canadian

<sup>21</sup> For more on this statue, sculpted by Theo Alice Ruggles Kitson, see <http://www.bostonhistorycollaborative.org/BostonFamilyHistory/immigranttrail/index.html>.

neighborhood on the other side of the Naumkeag complex.<sup>22</sup> Also of interest at this end of the street was the Nutile-Shapiro Ticket Agency at 213 Derby—possibly a company like the Carmen Kimball agency that employed Teofil Bartnicki as a courier and translator. In 1912, immigration from the Polish regions was still extremely heavy. New arrivals, the organizations and networks that came together to help them, and the businesses they patronized were still very actively reshaping Salem’s waterfront neighborhood.

## 1914 as a Watershed Year in Polish Salem

In 1913, as Hedwiga and Joseph Kohn were settling into their new home next door to St. Joseph Hall, a rural couple from the Austrian partition, Gregory and Catherine (Sucheki) Halik, migrated to Salem along with their three-year-old daughter, Mary. Like other young children of immigrants, Mary Halik, who would grow up to marry a fellow Pole named Nowak, was part of a transitional generation, raised by Polish-born parents in the very different environment of early twentieth-century America. The following year, 1914, proved to be a momentous one for Salem’s Poles on both the local and transnational levels.

The previous decades had seen a tremendous influx of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe.<sup>23</sup> 1913, the year of Mary’s arrival, was in fact the peak year of Polish immigration to the U.S., with almost 175,000 new arrivals.<sup>24</sup> The explosion of new ethnic populations, particularly in northeastern industrial cities, had already prompted a backlash among many long-settled Americans, including an influential circle of elite New Englanders who worried about the effects of heavy immigration on American culture and society.<sup>25</sup> Some of these people had founded the Immigration Restriction League of Boston in 1894 and lent their support to such measures as immigration quotas and literacy

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<sup>22</sup> Robaczewski Hall was at 209-213 Derby Street. E. Levesque, hairdresser, is shown in the 1912 street directory at 215 Derby.

<sup>23</sup> Tindall, *America*, 825-26. These groups, who included Hungarians, Italians, Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Russians, Roumanians, and Greeks, represented 70% of the immigrant population by 1890.

<sup>24</sup> Pula, *Polish Americans*, 19.

<sup>25</sup> Barbara Miller Solomon, *Ancestors and Immigrants: A Changing New England Tradition* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1956), 99-105, 109, 113, 198-205; Tindall, *America*, 828.

tests designed to limit immigration.<sup>26</sup> Other New Englanders, such as the settlement house workers of the House of Seven Gables and the employers who found the Poles and others to be willing workers in the region's burgeoning industry, approached the newcomers in less resistant ways, but there was a distinct current of unease in the way that many native-born Americans viewed their new foreign-born neighbors.

Advocates for immigration restriction were successful in pushing through legislation in the early 1920s that severely limited the numbers of people who could come to the U.S. from southern and eastern Europe.<sup>27</sup> For Poles, though, the end of the primary period of migration came slightly earlier, with the outbreak of the First World War in Europe. The routes that Polish migrants had been using for decades became largely inaccessible, and Poland's heavy losses during the war meant that many of its population who might have emigrated, particularly the young men, were killed.<sup>28</sup> The Halik family had arrived just before the start of World War I had put an end to the great flood of migration from partitioned Poland. By the time the immigration quota systems of the 1920s were enacted in the U.S., that flood had already slowed to a trickle.

For Poles, the start of World War I was momentous—and difficult—in other ways as well. Poles fought on all sides of the war: in Europe, many were conscripted to fight in the armies of the three occupying powers, while Polish immigrants fought in the U.S. and the armies of the other countries where they had settled, as well as in Polish military units organized outside of Poland itself. For the majority of Poles, the real war was against the occupation of their homeland, and they made whatever alliances they could in support of the goal of regaining Poland's independence.<sup>29</sup> This strategy created some difficulties for Poles already in America. Josef Pilsudski, the socialist general who was emerging as a

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<sup>26</sup> Solomon, *Ancestors and Immigrants*, 99-105, 109, 113, 198-205; Tindall, *America*, 828.

<sup>27</sup> The Johnson Act of 1921 established a quota system that favored the longer-established immigrant groups over those who had become more numerous in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century. In 1924, the Immigration Act refined these quotas further. Solomon, *Ancestors and Immigrants*, 198-205.

<sup>28</sup> Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 15.

<sup>29</sup> Lukowski and Zawadski, *Concise History*, 217-222. The entry of the U.S. into the war in 1917 presented an opening for Poles to demonstrate that they could be loyal Americans while still supporting the cause of Polish independence. They signed up enthusiastically to serve in the U.S. military, particularly after Woodrow Wilson's January 1917 speech declaring Polish independence to be a key war aim for the Allied powers (John Dewey, "Conditions among the Poles in the United States" [Washington, DC: Military Intelligence Bureau, 1918], 15).

national and military hero in Poland, saw the Germans as potential allies against what he regarded as the greater threat from the Russian empire—a position that did not sit well with Americans after the U.S. went to war with Germany in 1917.<sup>30</sup>

The ambivalent position of Poles, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and other occupied nations in the First World War, along with the intense nationalism that accompanied the U.S. war effort, heightened this suspicion and required those in the new Polish American communities to tread carefully between the demands of old and new loyalties.<sup>31</sup> After the war ended and a newly-independent Polish state emerged from the ashes of the three occupying empires, politically-active Polish American leaders—people like Teofil Bartnicki in Salem and Jan Romaszekwicz in Boston—had to negotiate among desires and goals that must have been difficult to reconcile. On the one hand, many Poles wanted to support their very fragile homeland state, which had finally achieved its long-awaited independence. At the same time, they were trying to present themselves as loyal new Americans, a position that was complicated by their existing European loyalties and by the hostility of many Americans to their presence. Among other things, the PRCUA and other ethnic organizations focused their attention in this period on mitigating the effects of immigration restriction and other kinds of discrimination against the immigrants.<sup>32</sup>

Fiercely partisan battles, the legacy of occupation and resistance that had caused such violence in Polish political life for so long, often played themselves out in the organizations that the immigrants created for themselves in their new communities. However, there were clearly many people among Salem's Poles who wanted to leave the upheaval of homeland politics and the memories of their former poverty behind them. Felix Soboczinski, offered a chance to revisit Poland in his later years, was clear about his preference: "Thank you very much, but I don't think I want to go back to Poland. When I left there, and brought my family here, I brought everything I wanted. There's nothing for me in Europe except a few bad memories. . . I'm an American now, and I guess I'll just stay

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<sup>30</sup> Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 49.

<sup>31</sup> In 1918, American military intelligence agencies commissioned progressive educator and philosopher John Dewey to investigate whether Poles in the U.S. were potential traitors. Dewey conducted a careful ethnographic study and concluded that Poles' support for Germany and Austria was an indirect way of maneuvering for Polish independence, and that Poles, like other stateless Eastern Europeans, had been left with few good choices by the imperial powers that had played smaller nations off against one another for many decades (Dewey, "Conditions among the Poles," 4-6).

<sup>32</sup> Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 124; Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 1987, 68.

here and see America first.”<sup>33</sup> Phyllis Luzinski recalls her mother’s response to the idea of visiting her rural home:

I remember when I was about 18 or 19 years old and I had said to my mother, “Well, everybody’s going back to Poland to see where they lived, and how about you and I going?” She said no, she had no interest whatsoever. She said, “I lived in very poor—we lived in a house that the animals came in too!” I think it was like two stories and the first floor, the animals were in it. She said, “They had dirt floors and no bathrooms and anything else,” you know. She said, “I never want to go back there.” So she had absolutely no interest!

Similarly, Frank Tyburc recalls his maternal grandfather, John Olszewsky,

talking about how he used to go and work for the Germans digging potatoes and things like that. And then I remember my grandmother who used to take care of me, you know, when we’d have a thunderstorm, she would say, “It’s like the *woyna*,” which is war. And talking about, you know, in Europe and so—it was mostly negative things.

Although Polish Americans continued to work at negotiating their multiple loyalties in the years of Polish independence between the world wars, there is a sense in which 1914 was a watershed year for Poles living in America. With the abrupt end of the largest wave of immigration from Poland, Polish Americans entered a new phase of their lives in the U.S. We can sense this shift in the recollections of Mary (Halik) Nowak, who became her father’s conduit to news of homeland politics once she was old enough to read. She recalled him always buying the Polish newspaper and having her read the headlines to him, “so when he went out with his phoney-molloney guys, he knew what they were talking about. He’d say, ‘Oh, no, my Mary said it was that Franz-Jozef is going to get this part back. . .’” But Mary herself had no recollections of what the men’s passionate political arguments were about. “Oh,” she said, “I wanted to get out of there. I had other things on my mind!” In many families, the younger generation was already becoming more assimilated and less connected to the volatile politics of the homeland.

## The Salem Fire

Mary was just old enough to have first-hand memories of the Salem Fire, the other reason that 1914 looms large in the history of Polish Salem. The fire began on June 25, 1914 in a leather factory in Blubber Hollow, an area packed with tanneries. It spread

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<sup>33</sup> “The Happiest Family in All the World,” c. 1942 (Sobocinski family).

quickly and widely, burning over 250 acres, destroying 1,600 buildings and displacing 14,000 people from their homes. Wildly destructive, the fire was also a catalyst for changes in industry, neighborhoods, and the city's landscape.<sup>34</sup> Then four years old, Mary Nowak remembered the catastrophic event:

All I remember is that we had to take...the *pierzyna*—a feather tick. She brought that from Europe, my mother brought that from Europe. So she took that and some of the clothes, and it was just my father, her and I. And he had a boat all ready. But we lived with people on White Street, we lived there on board [i.e. in a boarding house]. Them days people had to live on board until they found something... So he took us on a boat and we went in the harbor. And while we were in the harbor, I saw, honest to God, I remember, the flames. Just a ball of flame. What it was, I didn't know about it, I wasn't familiar with it, I was to shut up and sit quiet in the corner, you know, and my mother was crying. And evidently we were here only about a year or so. And she saw that, she was amazed—she never saw anything like that!

Hedwiga Kohn, eighteen and recently-married, had more detailed memories of the fire, which, as she recounted in a 1978 interview, happened on “a beastly hot day.”

Derby Street was all ablaze. The coal—Pickwick's Coal, they had coal in big piles, and when nightfall came, it was frightening. And if there was a wind, those sparks would fly, you know. And my husband said, “Well, I'm going to let people come in and take what they want, because it won't be long and this place is going.” So people came in and they took what they want and they cleaned the store out... [T]hey took canned goods and cookies and bread and everything they needed. And finally so it happened so that we were left without anything. And I had a housekeeper living with me then, she was an elderly woman, because I have to help in the store. And she would take a pitcher and go over to the Common and wait in line for the Red Cross to give us milk or water, you couldn't drink the water, it was all rust. You couldn't wash yourself, it was all rust.

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<sup>34</sup> Friedlander, “Historical Research,” 70; “Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company Historic District, National Register of Historic Places Nomination,” Draft (U.S. Department of the Interior/National Park Service, 1992).





Figure 32 The 250 acres burned by the 1914 Salem Fire are shaded on this map, with the west end of the Derby Street neighborhood at the fire zone's top right-hand corner. (Arthur Barnett Jones, *The Salem Fire*, shading added)

Much of the western end of the Derby Street neighborhood was burned, including the entire Naumkeag plant and many of the leather factories in the area. The French Canadian section of the city, including the impressive St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, was gutted, and the Polish neighborhood seemed threatened with the same fate. Having allowed people in the neighborhood to empty their store, the Kohns spent the night on Salem Common not knowing whether or not they had lost their home, business, and rental properties at the head of Derby Wharf. Hedwiga recalled:

There was a Polish woman there, had taken a mattress from her home. And she says to me, "You lay down," she says, "and rest." So I laid down and I must have fallen asleep. And a militia come up to me and he woke me and he says, "Are you burnt out?" I says, "Which way is the flag blowing from the Custom House?" Because that's where we lived, down near the Custom House. And he says, "Well, it's blowing over this way." And I says, "Oh, maybe we're burnt out now. I don't know, if it's blowing this way."

The fire burned as far as Central Wharf and the foot of Herbert Street when it stopped—miraculously, it seemed to some (Figure 33). Many Poles in Salem recall hearing stories about Father Czubek going out with holy water and a crucifix and halting the fire through

the power of faith.<sup>35</sup> In a similar story, Clara Kotarski, the French Canadian wife of community leader Alexander Kotarski, is said to have put a crucifix on their house in order to keep the fire from consuming the Kotarskis' row of buildings at the head of Derby Wharf.<sup>36</sup> Whoever can claim the credit, the Polish neighborhood as a whole was much luckier than the French Canadian one had been. The Kohns' property was spared, although the aftermath of the fire remained unsettling, particularly around the wharves where the big stockpiles of coal continued to burn long after the rest of the blaze was out. Mrs. Kohn remembered that, "My sister came up and she wouldn't stay. When she saw the red coals at night, she wouldn't stay. She was frightened to death. . . It burned for weeks! For weeks and weeks."



Figure 33 The edge of the fire zone at the foot of Herbert Street, with the steeple of the Polish church, by then in use as the parish school, visible just beyond the burned building and Immaculate Conception Church on the left. (Arthur Barnett Jones, *The Salem Fire*)

Many Poles in the community were not as lucky as the Kohns. Dorothy Stupakiewicz recalled how her grandparents, Antonina and Franciszek Gesek, escaped from their home on Peabody Street, at the western end of the Derby Street neighborhood, with almost nothing. Just a week before the fire, Franczisek had bought Antonina a new sewing machine so she could pursue her talent as a seamstress:

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<sup>35</sup> Carberg, "Rediscovering Salem Polonia."

<sup>36</sup> This story was related to former Salem Maritime NHS historian John Frayler by Henry Theriault, the nephew of Alexander and Clara Kotarski; it can be found in the park's files.

[My grandmother] would go to the Rogers store downtown and stand there for an hour or two studying a dress, and how it was made. And she would feel with her hands the material. And study that dress—she would come home, grab a newspaper, cut out a pattern for herself—and this is a woman who didn't know how to read or write, okay, and she spoke very little English. She cut out the pattern, got her material, and she was great with materials. And spread it out on the table, cut, cut, cut, got to the machine, sew, sew, sew, and that was, well, that was her life. But I think a week before the fire, my grandfather just came home with a new sewing machine. The fire broke out, they had to get out of the house. And the only thing my grandmother left the house with was my mother wrapped up in a blanket.

In the same way that the start of World War I in Europe had lasting repercussions for Poles living in America, the Salem Fire made important changes in the neighborhood that Poles were beginning to call home. In particular, the area's industrial landscape changed greatly, reshaping the experience of factory work that was part of the daily lives of many of Poles in the city.

## At Work in the Leather and Textile Industries

The nature of industrial labor itself was changing in the early twentieth century, as more sophisticated machinery took over many of the more skilled tasks of manufacturing, leaving workers either tending machines or performing physically demanding but less skilled jobs.<sup>37</sup> In Salem, the leather industry was primarily men's work, since it often involved heavy, dirty processes like lifting large hides out of dyeing vats. As Mary Nowak recalled toward the end of her life, "tannery work for men was terrible. Stunk like hell and they had to wear boots and they had to be very careful because the machinery there was dangerous." Weaving was more often done by women, following a long-standing pattern in the textile industry of using primarily female labor in many cloth-making processes.<sup>38</sup>

However, both men and women in Salem's Polish community did work in both industries. Dorothy Stupakiewicz's mother, who had planned to go to the Salem Commercial School for a secretarial course, quit school at age 16 because she needed

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<sup>37</sup> For a discussion of the mechanization of industrial labor in U.S. industry in this period and its effects on the experience of workers, see Edward Slavishak, *Bodies of Work: Civic Display and Labor in Industrial Pittsburgh* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), pp. 58-61.

<sup>38</sup> A foundational work on this pattern is Thomas Dublin's *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979). See also Mary Blewett, *Men, Women, and Work: Class, Gender, and Protest in the New England Shoe Industry, 1780-1910* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

to work to help support the family. She worked at shoe factories, preferring that to the loud environment of the Pequot Mill. Mary Nowak went in the other direction, starting in leather (at the Hunt and Rankin Company) and eventually working in the cotton mill. In between she also worked in the Sylvania electronics factory, which became more prominent in Salem's industrial sector as leather and textiles declined. Mary's experience of factory work began as soon as she finished the eighth grade, and shows the importance of family networks in how people found work and moved from job to job (as well as, in Mary's case, how people occasionally rebelled against working too closely with their parents and other relatives!):

I went to work in a shoe shop. Five dollars a week. Five dollars a week! [laughs]  
And then somebody told me that if you go to the tannery, you can get fourteen dollars a week. Wow! Big money! So my mother knew somebody that worked in the tannery, she talked for me, and I got in the tannery, so I worked in the tannery. And then I worked, and then after I had one kid, "I'm never going back to work, I'm going to take care of my kid." Like hell! Depression came—they did the job on us. They you had to go to work. So I went to work at the electronic, in Sylvania. So I know how to make, I used to know how to make bulbs, I knew. . . how to weigh the leather and what kind of leather went for men's shoes or children's shoes. It was fun. . . And then later on. . . you had to travel [to get to work], and it so happened that my mother got a job in one place and she kept an eye on me all the time, and every time we came home she'd say, "I don't want you to dance with him anymore. The Italian woman told me that he's no good," blah blah blah. Well, to hell with that—all my friends are working in the cotton mill, I'm getting in the cotton mill. So I went in the cotton mill. And I learned how to weave.

Interviewees for this study shared few recollections about their (or their parents') actual work experiences, so we have relatively little first-hand information about what it was like to work in the leather and shoe shops or in the Pequot Mill. This section will make use of secondary and archival information to outline some developments in the city's industries in the early twentieth century. More research could be done to discover the specific roles of Salem's Polish population in these processes, particularly in terms of building on existing studies of labor organizing to illuminate Polish workers' hopes and expectations about their work lives and their relationships with their employers.

In Chapter Two, we have already seen that strikes and labor unrest in the late nineteenth century contributed to shakeups in the leather industry in and around Salem. The 1914 fire also had a devastating effect. More than forty factory buildings, many of them tanneries and shoe shops, were destroyed in the fire. While some leather shops

rebuilt in the city, others moved to neighboring towns and some left the state altogether. Competition from the industry in the Midwest as well as labor problems added to the challenges, and by the 1920s many of Salem's big leather shops had closed. There were just 29 tanning businesses in Salem at the start of 1920, and three more closed their doors that year.<sup>39</sup>

However, some new shops also opened in the years following the fire, and it seems that changes in the industry allowed some opportunities for newer businesspeople to enter the field—perhaps including some immigrants like Herman Tyburc, who owned at least two shoe factories, according to his grandson. One Irish owner, John Flynn, began his business in 1920, setting up shop in Blubber Hollow near Gallows Hill, eventually selling their products nationally and becoming known for “flyntann,” their own garment leather. When the company celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1945, it employed 300 people, including seven of the original 18 workers. The Quarter Century Club included at least two Polish workers—Bronislaus Kobuszewski and Wladyslaw Kobuszewski.<sup>40</sup> Alice Zujewski's father, who arrived in Salem as a young man, worked at John Flynn and Sons, in part because it was a job where he didn't have to know English. Alice remembers that the work could be brutal:

He was a leather finisher. And he used to work with a lot of chemicals, I think the dyes and so forth. And I can remember as a child, him coming home and his arms were all covered with sores. And my mother used to wrap his arms with flannel and cotton material from the Pequot Mills. I'll never forget that. And it was from the dyes and the chemicals.

Dorothy Stupakiewicz's grandfather—the man who bought his wife a brand-new sewing machine just before their home was lost in the 1914 fire—also bought a small leather factory with his relatives. Eventually he bought out his partners, owning the business by himself until he lost it during the Depression. Dorothy's father had a variety of jobs, but

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<sup>39</sup> Campbell, “Industrial and Social Development,” 15-16; McAllister, “Salem Then and Now,” 111.

<sup>40</sup> John Flynn eventually brought three sons and a daughter into the business with him. They began with 18 workers producing 100 dozen of skins daily, specializing in sheep and lambskins. At first, John Flynn and Sons., Inc. supplied leather for shoe linings, later expanding to produce leather for slippers and the hat trade. In the 1930s, Flynn and Sons focused on the leather garment trade, developing new processes and methods. They expanded, purchasing two more buildings and were able to respond to a request to fill orders for cowhide coats for the Air Force during WWII. John Flynn, [1945?] *John Flynn and Sons, Inc.* (Salem, MA: Privately printed, c.1945), 3-5.

he too worked in a leather factory. Dorothy recalled him talking about lifting the heavy, wet leather hides out of the lime, the first part of the leather manufacturing process.

While the leather and shoe shops were more numerous and—at least in the early days of industry—more economically important in Salem’s economy, the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company was more visible and striking because of its big waterfront factory at the western end of Derby Street. The old factory, where production had started in 1847, was an unmistakable part of the city’s landscape (Figure 31). It boasted 116,000 spindles in 1914, when the immense buildings were leveled by the Salem Fire.<sup>41</sup> The company rebuilt quickly, though, and took the opportunity to “rationalize” its processes and management. The new construction used new fireproof technologies, such as reinforced concrete. The modernized plant that was back in production by February 1916 was now driven by electric rather than steam power. Newly installed Draper looms helped the mill start producing quickly. The plant had fewer, larger buildings designed for particular machines and production processes: a cotton storehouse, a spinning and carding mill, a weave shed, and a cloth room. The new weave shed, with its sawtooth roof to let in light, was a central feature of the new plant. It originally covered seven acres on the harbor side of the plant, and was eventually enlarged with an addition to accommodate nine acres of looms in one gigantic room—the largest weave shed in the world in 1949, according to the company’s management (Figure 34). It was connected to the spinning mill by an elevated bridge. Dyeing and finishing were done at the Danvers Bleachery, which NSCC purchased in 1909, located in an area that was once South Danvers but had become part of Peabody. By 1929, the Pequot Mill and its bleachery employed over 2,500 men and women.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Jarvis, *The Story of Pequot*, 28-29.

<sup>42</sup> Unless cited otherwise, general information about the NSCC in this section is drawn from the NSCC Historic Register Nomination, Section 8 (2-5) and Section 7 (4-5) and from R.C. Nyman and Elliott D. Smith, *Union Management Cooperation in the Stretch-Out: Labor Extension at the Pequot Mills* (New Haven: Institute of Human Relations, Yale University Press, 1934).

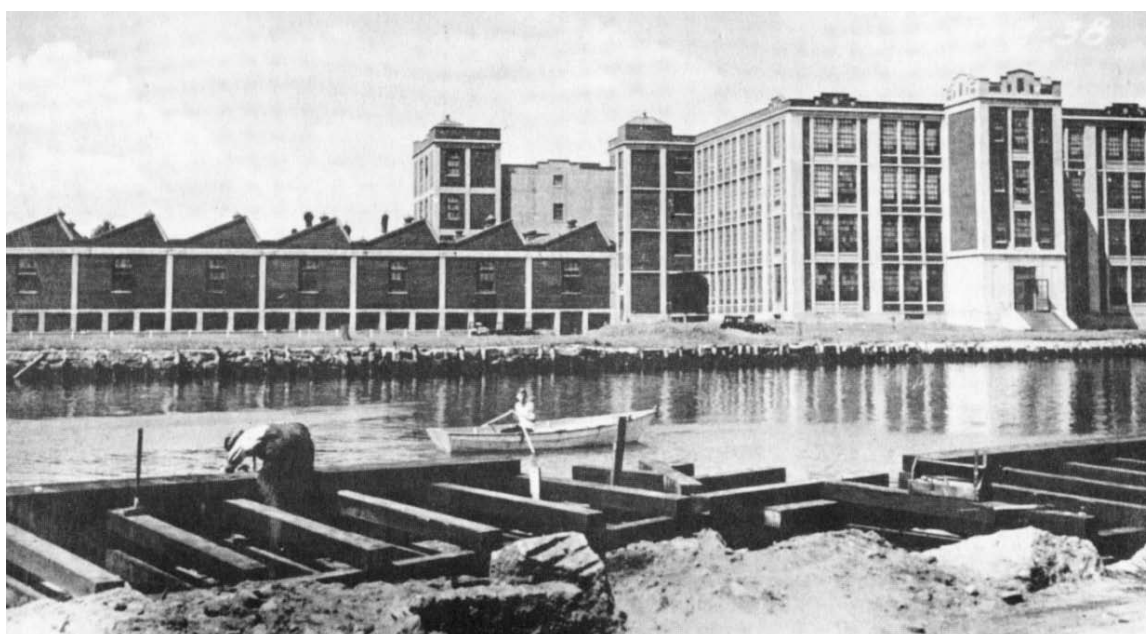


Figure 34 The rebuilt Pequot Mill in a view from 1938, showing the immense saw-toothed weave shed at left. (Salem Maritime NHS)

## **Labor relations and the 1933 strike**

The new Pequot Mill included amenities that workers didn't have at other cotton mills, such as modern toilets and washrooms, lockers and a health clinic. New technology and specially designed buildings allowed for more efficient production, which meant that the machines required less attention from the workers. However, such efficiency also encouraged the company to increase the number of machines each worker tended (termed a "stretch-out") and increase machine speed ("speed-up"). These changes had a huge impact on people's day-to-day work experiences, and workers often resisted the increased demands that were being placed on them. In the existing records of labor-management negotiations and occasional conflict at the Naumkeag mill, we can see evidence that Polish workers were among those who were most determined to improve their working conditions.

Earlier labor actions at the Pequot Mill showed that Polish workers were at the forefront of resistance. In November of 1917, there "had been trouble at the Bleachery" where men walked out in support of their demands for a 50 hour work week and more pay. They stayed out a little over a week but then voluntarily returned to work.<sup>43</sup> In

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<sup>43</sup> Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company (NSCC), Directors Records, AB-3, Nov. 21, 1917.

1918 the carders and spinners organized their first union, and went on strike for higher wages, beginning on June 21 with the doffer boys (who were responsible for removing full bobbins after thread was wound). Soon other workers stopped, until almost the entire plant was shut down. The strikers, now 1,200 strong, joined the Central Labor Union, and began pressing for an investigation of their wages. They wanted a 25% increase for spoolers, 17.5 % for doffers, oilers, roving boys and spinning room workers, and 25% for the card room. When workers and management reached a stalemate, both eventually agreed to accept a decision by the State Board of Conciliation and Arbitration. The Board's ruling was in favor of the strikers' wage demands and a minimum wage for women workers. It also required the company to recognize the strikers' union, which was reorganized as part of the United Textile Workers of America, American Federation of Labor and which came to represent all of the Pequot workers except the loom fixers, who had their own union.<sup>44</sup>

Although management agreed to abide by the Board's decision, the strikers refused to return to work before the investigation was complete. Management pointed to the "Austrian Poles" as the part of the problem. These Polish workers, the most recent arrivals in Salem, were paid less than their French Canadian fellow-workers, and they appear to have shared the readiness that many other Polish immigrants showed in demanding fair treatment from employers, even sometimes going so far as to defy their own unions in doing so. Many first-generation Polish immigrants—including many women—had been involved in wildcat labor actions in the period from the 1880s to the 1920s, often strongly supported by their communities.<sup>45</sup>

When the Pequot plant reopened on June 25, most of the strikers returned to work, but management reported that "the Polish operatives seemed unsettled."<sup>46</sup> Another

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<sup>44</sup> Aviva Chomsky, "Salem as a Global City, 1850-2004," in *Salem: Place, Myth, and Memory*, Dane Anthony Morrison and Nancy Lusignan Schultz, eds. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 222; Aviva Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories: New England, Columbia and the Making of a Global Working Class* (Duke University Press, 2008), 50; NSCC, Directors Records, AB-3, June 21, 1918; Nyman and Smith, *Union Management Cooperation*, 5, 6, 6 n.1.

<sup>45</sup> Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 29, 33; Adam Walaszek, "Was the Polish Worker Asleep? Immigrants, Unions and Workers' Control in America, 1900-1922," *Polish American Studies* XLVI: 1(Spring 1989), 85. Radzilowski notes the central involvement of Polish workers in the 1893 Chicago Ship and Sanitary Canal workers' strike, anthracite coal field strikes in Pennsylvania in 1897, and the well-known Back of the Yards strike in Chicago in 1921-22, all of which involved violence against unarmed strikers and organizers.

<sup>46</sup> Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories*, 50; NSCC, Directors Records, AB-3, Sept. 18, 1918, Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Company meetings.



strike followed in the fall of 1918, again over wages. This time management declined intervention by the State Board of Conciliation and Arbitration, and workers returned after they received some concessions to their demands.<sup>47</sup>

Over the next decade, the tensions caused by increased competition and new technologies in the American textile industry continued to make themselves felt at the plant. In the 1920s, as southern textile factories began to cut into New England's markets, the Naumkeag management responded by increasing the speed of production to maintain their profits, which union leaders again protested against. In 1927, the union and management agreed to a union-management plan under which they would meet regularly to talk about labor relations and negotiate working conditions and fair wages. The union agreed to maintain production, cooperate with the introduction of new machinery, and postpone any strike for a 60-day negotiation period. Monthly management and workers meetings did not include rank and file workers; the union now functioned as a go-between for management and labor.<sup>48</sup> This did not necessarily sit well with all workers, including some Poles; Mary Nowak, a union member at the Pequot Mill ("You had to be") during her time there, noted that over time, union leadership seemed to create a barrier to communication and equity rather than a way to achieve those things: "They didn't follow the rules like they started [to]. You know, those things have to be built up. Now... they've got so many more chiefs than Indians."

Naumkeag managers next tried to impose "labor extensions," or "stretch-outs" as a way of lowering labor costs. This meant giving some workers more machines to tend with a wage increase to offset the extra work. Management appears to have believed that because the union had agreed to support and cooperate in issues relating to the success and profits of the company, workers would agree to the new system. However, workers were far from happy, in large part because of the layoffs caused by giving more work to fewer workers.<sup>49</sup> Eventually the union agreed to what was termed a "joint research" strategy that would offer a plan for speedups and stretch-outs based on research into the work processes by an industrial engineer. The workers, however, felt that labor

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<sup>47</sup> Chomsky, "Salem as Global City," 222; Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories*, 51; NSCC Historic District Nomination, Section 8, 7.

<sup>48</sup> Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories*, 54-55; Nyman and Smith, *Union Management Cooperation*, 8-10.

<sup>49</sup> Nyman and Smith, *Union Management Cooperation*, 12-14.

extensions put the burden of economic conditions upon them and that the wage increases did not cover the amount of extra work caused by tending the extra machines.<sup>50</sup>

In 1930, Naumkeag began a stretch-out in the Pequot Mill weave room, giving each weaver 20 instead of 13 looms to tend. By the end of May 1930, most of the weave room worked under the stretch-out system. This was extended to the spinning room in 1931, by which time 100-150 workers had been laid off.<sup>51</sup> Labor/management relations, already tense over the imposition of the stretch-out, worsened over the contentious issue of who should be laid off. Management based its decisions on a seniority system that ranked workers based on the length of time in a particular job, rather than on the overall time someone had worked for the company. Many of the Pequot workers, however, were married women who had taken time off for the birth of children. As Mary Nowak recalled,

The way I worked in the mill when my kids were young, as soon as I got pregnant I never went to work, I'd even tell the boss, "The hell with you. I'll never talk to you again." And then a couple of years later, I'd come back, I wanted a job and he'd say, "I remember what you told me!" And I'd say, "Yeah, but I got two kids now," and I'd get my job again!

In the weave shed, most of the nearly 600 skilled, well-paid workers were, like Mary, married women between the ages of 21 and 45. They had an average of ten years experience but—according to management—no seniority. These Polish and French Canadian women saw the issue in starkly gendered terms—management failed to understand their importance in supporting their families, and discriminated against married women.<sup>52</sup> Wage reductions during the deepening economic depression in 1932 exacerbated worker discontent. In 1933, management proposed another stretch-out and accompanying layoffs. Workers responded this time by voting to strike on May 8, 1933.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Chomsky, "Salem as Global City," 222; Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories*, 55-56; Nyman and Smith, *Union Management Cooperation*, 14-16, 29-31, 40, 171-172.

<sup>51</sup> Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories*, 56-57; Nyman and Smith, *Union Management Cooperation*, 59, 59 n. 1, 68-71, 74-75, 90.

<sup>52</sup> Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories*, 57; Nyman and Smith, *Union Management Cooperation*, 68-71, 75, 90.

<sup>53</sup> Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories*, 58; Nyman and Smith, *Union Management Cooperation*, 95, 100, 111, 119, 124, 126, 142; see also Salem Evening News, May 9, 1933.

The workers faced two battles in this conflict: their own union and Naumkeag management. From the beginning, workers were not happy with the union leadership. They threatened to withdraw from the United Textile Workers union and demanded the removal of union officials and the union agent. For their part, union leaders were not sympathetic to the weavers' grievances over the impact of the stretch-outs and the seniority system in determining lay-offs. The union president declared the strike vote illegal and ordered the workers back to work, blaming the agitation on outside causes: radicals and communists in the union community, and the influence of a strike in the local leather industry on striking bleachery workers.<sup>54</sup> The striking Pequot workers decided to forge ahead even without union support. They formed a strike committee headed up by their only sympathizer in the union, a bleachery worker who was the union vice president. They set up a relief headquarters and picket lines, and began an eleven-week battle for an end to the "joint research" system, the stretch-outs, and the lay-offs.<sup>55</sup>

An ugly standoff quickly developed. The UTW office in New York cut off the strikers' funding from the Salem local, while city officials discouraged local social services and businesses from helping the strikers.<sup>56</sup> City, union, and the local newspaper joined together in holding local and outside agitators responsible for the strike. At times, as in past instances of labor activism, Polish workers were held up as the radical element. The *Salem Evening News* pointed to the "Ward One group"—that is, those from the Polish neighborhood—as among the most recalcitrant of the workers. Some strikers did solicit help from the communist National Textile Workers Union, which sent representatives to Salem to meet with workers before the strike. The charges of radicalism were exacerbated when the NTWU sent a young, communist organizer to Salem—Anne Burlak.<sup>57</sup>

Burlak came to industrial labor and activism early in her life. She went to work in a silk mill in Pennsylvania as a young teenager, and her Ukrainian immigrant parents had both been involved in labor causes. She was involved in both union organizing and the Communist Party, and when she arrived in Salem at the age of 22 she had already had experience organizing mills around Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. She had helped the

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<sup>54</sup> Chomsky, "Salem as Global City," 222; Nyman and Smith, *Union Management Cooperation*, 150-151.

<sup>55</sup> Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories*, 60; Nyman and Smith, *Union Management Cooperation*, 153, 155.

<sup>56</sup> Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories*, 59-61; "A Bird in the Hand," *Salem Evening News*, May 9, 1933.

<sup>57</sup> Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories*, 62.

NTWU organize after the Gastonia Strike in North Carolina in 1929. In New England, the NTWU previously sent Burlak to organize in New Bedford and to support strikers in Rhode Island and Lawrence.<sup>58</sup>

In Salem, city officials targeted Burlak as a dangerous outside agitator. Mayor George Bates watched her closely and sent the police to strike meetings. Bates presented a plan to the workers which requested that they return to work but did not meet their demands on “joint research” and seniority. The strikers rejected Bates’ plan, and the Salem *Evening News* blamed the impasse on “an organized group of 300 strikers with Communistic tendencies.”<sup>59</sup> Again the Polish workers were identified as the center of a radical element among the strikers. The newspaper contended that Burlak controlled these Polish workers, and that the Franco-Americans likely wanted to return to work and were considering splitting from the Polish contingent. Ultimately, however, a vote on the plan was soundly rejected by the strikers.<sup>60</sup>

Certainly the strikers found needed support in Anne Burlak and the NTWU, in part because the NTWU collected relief funds that helped to support families during the strike. They also had the support of Peabody’s former mayor, Robert Bakeman, a socialist. But the strike community also found tremendous resilience and solidarity within the community of Salem workers itself. Union meetings were well attended and robust, with the proceedings conducted in English, French, and Polish. There had been an earlier history of some ethnic conflict among workers when Polish workers tried to elect a Polish union agent but failed because of opposition by French Canadian and Irish American workers. This time, however, ethnic conflict did not undermine the strikers’ solidarity and commitments. One leader of the strike, former union president Wilfred Levesque, was French Canadian. Relief funds came from well-organized and widely-attended community events such as tag sales and baseball matches. Workers from Peabody and Beverly attended fundraising and solidarity-building events; over 600 people attended one Sunday picnic. The strikers received support from workers outside the textile industry too—the National Shoe Workers Union made weekly contributions to the cause.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories*, 84-88.

<sup>59</sup> Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories*, 68, 67.

<sup>60</sup> Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories*, 68-69; Chomsky, “Salem as Global City,” 223-224.

<sup>61</sup> Chomsky, “Salem as Global City,” 223-224; Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories*, 70-72; Nyman and Smith, *Union Management Cooperation*, 8, 153.

A meeting called by the union for June 6, 1933 brought over 1,000 workers together. They voted again against returning to work, and the following weeks brought more meetings and violence. The State Board of Arbitration became involved, but the workers still refused to give in to management's terms. It took the intervention of U.S. Labor commissioners to reach an agreement between Naumkeag and the strikers. When management finally agreed to end the joint research and labor extensions for a period of two years and to institute seniority rules, the strike was resolved. Naumkeag also agreed to recognize a new independent union—the Independent Sheeting Workers of America (ISWA), Local One, formed by workers who had abandoned the UTW.

The resolution was a huge victory for the Pequot workers.<sup>62</sup> As with most strikes, however, there were lasting hard feelings in the community. Mary Nowak was not among the strikers in 1933, but she recalled a man who lived on Carlton Street who had been a strike-breaker and who was spurned by community members as a result, to the extent of needing to have protection when he came out of work to avoid being attacked by strikers and their sympathizers. According to Mary, “He was such a nice man, but I guess he wanted the money, and he says what the hell. And he went to work and he was one of the scabs. And when everything got healed up and everybody went back to work, they never wanted to talk to him. They ignored him. Because they always remembered that he was a scab.”

When the two-year agreement ended in 1935, the Naumkeag workers demanded continuation of the terms of the 1933 conditions. Management responded by threatening to close the mill, pointing to the desperate conditions facing the New England cotton industry as a whole and the closing of many New England mills in favor of newer facilities at southern plants.<sup>63</sup> Ultimately, Salem's textile workers lost their jobs when Naumkeag followed the rest of New England's textile factories to the south where labor was cheaper and raw material closer to hand. In 1949, Naumkeag bought the Whitney mill in Spartanburg, SC; they named it Pequot and produced cotton sheeting in both locations. Desperate to keep the mill in Salem open, workers in Salem agreed to increased workloads in 1952. But the next year, Naumkeag closed the Salem plant and moved their

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<sup>62</sup> Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories*, 72-74; Nyman and Smith, *Union Management Cooperation*, 161-62, 165.

<sup>63</sup> Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories*, 74-76.

entire business to South Carolina, putting 800 workers out of work. The Pequot plant in Salem was purchased and later reused as an office and industrial park.<sup>64</sup>

## Salem's Polish Main Street Revisited (1939)

Salem's Derby Street neighborhood had already been remade once, when the city's economy shifted from maritime trade to industry in the early nineteenth century. Now, in the early decades of the twentieth century, the industrial economy was beginning to show the strain that would eventually lead to the hollowing out of New England's manufacturing base by the later part of the century. The ongoing labor conflicts in the Pequot Mill reflected tensions caused by competition, mechanization, and other changes in the once-mighty textile and leather industries. In this period, the slow decline of industry and the decaying remnants of the even older maritime economy prompted Salem, like many northeastern towns and cities, to search for new ways to reinvent itself and its waterfront area. As these changes took place, Poles in the community were more and more likely to find jobs outside the old neighborhood. By the 1930s, many in the second generation already worked in retail or the public sector or in the electrical machinery industry, most notably with the Sylvania Corporation, which was based on Loring Avenue in South Salem.<sup>65</sup> Deindustrialization was a slow and uneven process, however, and throughout the middle years of the century, Derby Street retained its

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<sup>64</sup> Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories*, 78; Chomsky, "Salem as Global City," 225. Two years later after NSCC closed in Salem, the 9165 Corporation bought the plant, which was purchased in 1959 by the Shetland Industries Center and then Shetland Properties in 1969. It was operated as an office and commercial park, the "Shetland Office Industrial Park." (NSCC Historic District Nomination, section 7, p. 5)

<sup>65</sup> Frank A. Poor, son of a tanner, opened the Bay State Lamp Company in Danvers in 1901. Poor and his brother opened the Hygrade Incandescent Lamp Company on Salem's Boston Street in 1916. Now making lamps and radio tubes, they merged with Nilco in 1931 to create Hygrade Sylvania Corporation. Leather and shoes and textiles all hung on through the Depression of the 1930s, and Hygrade Sylvania even built a new plant in 1936. By 1952, electrical machinery was Salem's dominant industry, though leather and shoes persisted. (MHC, 1938; Chomsky, "Salem as Global City," 226; Campbell, "Industrial and Social Development," 16-17) In 1959 Sylvania merged with General Telephone Co. to form GTE Sylvania; they produced electronics, lighting and precision materials. By 1983 the Loring Avenue plant employed almost 700 workers, but they aspired to global expansion and manufacture. As a result, Sylvania laid off over 500 workers as they moved towards closing the Loring Avenue plant. They closed their Boston Street plant in 1933 when they sold part of their operations to a German company. Finally, Osram Sylvania closed their last Massachusetts plants in 1998; all production moved to Kentucky, Mexico, and Canada. (Chomsky, "Salem as Global City," 227; MHC, "Reconnaissance Survey," 38)

character as “a little town” with Polish businesses and clubs along the length of the street from the Naumkeag Mill in the west to Webb Street in the east. This chapter will conclude with another imagined walk along Derby Street, this time from west to east, noting some of the changes that were taking place in 1939 as industry faltered and the city began to preserve and market its own maritime history in a more intentional way.<sup>66</sup>



Figure 35 The building of the former Polish Industrial Bank, also known in the community as “Zarembski’s Bank,” still stands at 226 Derby Street.

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<sup>66</sup>The year 1939 was chosen for several reasons. A set of Sanborn maps for Salem, updated to 1938, gives us a snapshot of occupancy and use just prior to that year. The creation of the national park in 1938 made considerable changes in the center of the Derby Street neighborhood, and it seemed important to reflect those changes in this description of the area. The time period immediately before World War II also represents a moment when the neighborhood retained its pre-war character as a predominantly Polish ethnic enclave, while its makeup at that time was largely the same as what was experienced by third-generation Poles in Salem who grew up during and after the war, whose recollections will form the basis of Chapter Six. Focusing on 1939 allows us to examine both the changes that were taking place in the mid-twentieth century and the continuities that persisted later into the century. This second imaginary walk along Derby Street proceeds from west to east as a way of transitioning from the discussion of working conditions at the Pequot Mill—at the western end of the street—to the other topics covered in this section: the creation of the national park in 1938 and the persistence of many small Polish-owned stores and businesses, particularly at the eastern end of the neighborhood.

In the area around the Naumkeag Mill at the western end of Derby Street, the growing presence of the automobile in American life was making itself felt. Many of the coal, wood, and other supply companies were gone (the George Pickering Coal Company was among the few survivors) and the street was dotted instead with gas stations, repair shops, and other businesses that sold and serviced cars. Signalling the shift into a car-dominated world, the trolley lines were also gone.<sup>67</sup> At 226 Derby Street, a small and solid red brick building, constructed the year after the 1914 fire, housed the Polish Industrial Bank, also known in the Polish community as “Zarembski’s Bank” after its president, John Zarembski. Like other bankers in the immigrant community, Zarembski seems to have fulfilled multiple functions ranging from meeting newcomers as they arrived in the U.S. to facilitating the sending of money from immigrants to family in Poland, as well as providing a crucial piece of financial infrastructure for Poles in Salem.<sup>68</sup>

Just west of the Home for Aged Women and the Custom House, between Herbert and Union Streets, a small block of stores on the north side of the street reflected the heavily Polish character of the neighborhood: Soboczinski’s restaurant at 212 Derby, hairdresser Wanda Jeswicki at 206, and Pocharski Brothers funeral home at 204. If our pedestrian had glanced up Herbert Street, the expanded compound of the Polish school would have been visible, now straddling both sides of the street and encompassing the old Lynde school and a former Catholic church in addition to the building constructed to serve as the Poles’ own first church. A little further east, though, big changes were taking place in the streetscape, considerably altering the character of this part of Polish Salem.

Despite the vitality of the Polish neighborhood, many of the once-central features of the Derby Street neighborhood were in a sorry state by the 1920s. The Custom House, once the centerpiece of the maritime landscape, was all but unused, and Derby Wharf was covered with abandoned and dilapidated sheds and used as a storage facility for trolleys that the city had taken out of service—a “sad commentary,” according to the

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<sup>67</sup> Derby Wharf was owned for a time by the Eastern Massachusetts Street Railway Company. For many years a collection of abandoned trolley cars was stored at the head of Derby Wharf, where they occasionally became part of the playground for neighborhood children; Jane Davidowicz, who grew up next to the wharf, remembered a friend teaching her to dance on the smooth wooden floors of the old trolleys. “Derby Wharf Lacks Any of Its Former Businesslike Look,” *Salem Evening News*, 14 August 1926, 11.

<sup>68</sup> Little hard data was discovered about Zarembski or the Polish Industrial Bank during this study. Further investigation could provide valuable insight into the network of mutual assistance that Poles created for themselves in the city.



Salem *Evening News*.<sup>69</sup> Preservation-minded people in Salem and the region lamented this state of decay, and some began to suggest that something should be done to remedy it. These preservationists were mostly part of a cohort of elite Yankees who saw themselves as protecting and defending the Anglo-Saxon heritage of the region in the face of social, economic, and demographic change.<sup>70</sup> Many of these people saw the newer buildings in Salem's waterfront neighborhood—including some built by the Polish immigrants—as intrusions or eyesores in a significant and historic landscape, and some deplored the conversion of Derby Street mansions into boarding houses, tenements, and warehouses.<sup>71</sup> They sought, instead, to restore the city's harborfront to something of its early nineteenth-century glory.<sup>72</sup> The Derby House, which Joseph Kohn had owned since 1911, was the first site to be refurbished as a historic site; Kohn sold the house to the Society

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<sup>69</sup> "Old custom House Is Sad Commentary on Some Govt. Ways," Salem Evening News, Friday, June 16, 1922, 5.

<sup>70</sup> For instance, when the novelist Henry James took a trip to Salem in 1906 to see the House of Seven Gables, he bemoaned the presence of the "flagrant foreigner" in the historic neighborhood, and hoped that preserving the "simple dignity" of the Gables house would teach appropriate American "social 'values'" to the immigrants. James Lindgren, *Preserving Historic New England: Preservation, Progressivism, and the Remaking of Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 73.

<sup>71</sup> "Sad Commentary," 5.

<sup>72</sup> Influential figures in historic preservation efforts in Salem included William Sumner Appleton of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (now Historic New England); George Francis Dow of the Essex Institute; Harlan P. Kelsey, a landscape architect who sat on the Salem Planning Board; and Louise du Pont Crowninshield of Marblehead, whose husband was descended from both the Derby and Crowninshield families and who was deeply involved in many preservationist projects. Caroline Emmerton, whose House of Seven Gables project will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six, was also an important presence in the city's preservation realm. Within the National Park Service, historian Edwin Small, hired to work in Salem under the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, eventually became the Regional Historian for New England and was an important supporter of the development of Salem Maritime NHS. (Pauline Chase-Harrell, Carol Ely and Stanley Moss, "Administrative History of the Salem Maritime National Historic Site" [National Park Service, 1993])

for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA) in 1927 and it was opened to the public in May 1929.<sup>73</sup>

The National Park Service had begun to take an interest in historic resources, as well as purely “natural” ones, in the 1920s and 1930s. NPS Director Horace Albright began to push for the inclusion of historic areas in the growing national park system in the 1930s, a trend that was given a boost by the creation of George Washington Birthplace National Monument and Colonial National Monument in 1930 and the 1933 addition of battlefields and historic forts formerly administered by the War Department. Other Depression-era programs, such as the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Historic Sites Act of 1935 added to the growing historical focus within the agency. During the Depression, the NPS took a very active role in developing many federal public works projects. In conjunction with the Civilian Conservation Corps and other agencies, the Park Service helped to create historical parks, historic sites, scenic highways and trails, and other history-related projects.<sup>74</sup> In Salem, landscape architect Harlan Kelsey was instrumental in attracting the NPS’s interest to the Derby Wharf area, six acres of which were formally designated as Salem Maritime National Historic Site in 1938.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> “Restoring of Derby House Started This Morning by Workmen,” Salem Evening News, 21 May 1928, 2; “Restoration of Derby House to Take a Month,” Salem Evening News, 31 July 1928, 3; “Old Derby Counting House to be Restored as Well as Mansion,” Salem Evening News, June 27, 1928, 5; “Old Derby House, Restored to Original Finish, is Informally Opened by Salem Society Folk,” Salem Evening News, May 17, 1929, 19. Some forty years later, in an interview for the House of Seven Gables, Hedwiga Kohn recalled the sale of the Derby Mansion: “We sold the place. Then they didn’t want to let my children use the backyard, the gardens out there. He planted every tree in the garden. There were different [types?] of fruit trees. We had ever-bearing berries. We had gooseberries. You don’t see gooseberries. We had currants. You don’t see currants anymore. Those things, I don’t know why they stopped. They used to be lovely. And those trees, most of them are down now.” Recalling the reasons for giving up the property, Mrs. Kohn said, “It was rather difficult keeping it up. We had four families living in it. And, of course, the front hallway and the stairway was sealed. We wouldn’t let them use that front hall at all. They had to use the back entrance. And every time a family would move out and a new one would come in, they wouldn’t come in unless we painted it and papered it and did the ceilings and fixed it up. It was a ball and chain, you know. . . . We knew then that some day they were going to wreck our house down. Because it was built so that it took the best part of the Derby House away.”

<sup>74</sup> Chase-Harrell et al., “Administrative History,” 5-6; Barry Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1986); Harlan D. Unrau and G. Frank Williss, *Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s* (Denver: Denver Service Center, National Park Service, 1983).

<sup>75</sup> Chase-Harrell et al., “Administrative History,” 7-10.

To the preservationists and many others in the city, the establishment of the national park was a way to clean up a decayed part of the city and improve Salem's image and appearance. To people living in the tenements and boarding houses, of course, including many Poles, this was home, and the creation of the new park around the Custom House and Derby Wharf erased a number of structures that were integral parts of the Polish neighborhood. Some of the properties deemed to be unrelated to the park's mission were taken by the city by eminent domain, and many tenants were evicted in the process.<sup>76</sup> Among the "seventeen unsightly buildings used as tenements, stores, and garages"<sup>77</sup> demolished during the park's creation were the block in front of the Hawkes House, which included Isadore Alpers' clothing store and Joseph Kohn's two-storefront building with his home above it. At the head of Derby Wharf, Alexander and Clara Kotarski's big brick building, which had housed a number of businesses and clubs over the years, was taken down (Figure 36), as were the smaller wooden buildings also owned by the Kotarskis in this block. These included a bakery that many Poles in the neighborhood recalled as a highlight of shopping on Derby Street. As a small child in one of the tenements next door, Jane Davidowicz would meet her friends to buy doughnuts (two for five cents) that they would then eat while sitting and talking on the Custom House steps. "Kotarski Hall," as the big brick building was sometimes known, furnished other kinds of entertainment for the neighborhood children, in Jane's recollection:

We'd be outside the window, you know, watching everything. And they had more fights, because the pool room was—that big building that was a grocery store, the hall upstairs, the Falcons Hall, on the other side it was the pool room. So when the guys got mad at each other they used to come outside and fight. And we'd be at the window. That was our floor show!

Many tenants were evicted from the Custom House Court buildings formerly owned by Herman Tyburc, and on the other side of the new park area, the Polish American Veterans Association lost its home at 22 Kosciusko Street, relocating to an old firehouse at the foot of Bentley Street a couple of blocks away.<sup>78</sup> The Polish Falcons were also displaced, not for the first time, it would appear; the group occupied many locations

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<sup>76</sup> Chase-Harrell et al., "Administrative History," 14, 16; Friedlander, "Historical Research," 153.

<sup>77</sup> Friedlander, "Historical Research," 153; Chase Herrell, et al., "Administrative History," 17.

<sup>78</sup> "Polish-American Veterans to Move to New Quarters: Building Taken for Park," Salem Evening News, Nov. 13, 1937, 2. "The Collins Cove Playground Field House, Formerly the Polish-American Clubhouse, Is Towed From Its Old Site at Derby Wharf Around the Willows to Its New Location," Salem Evening News, June 4, 1938.



Figure 36 “Kotarski Hall” at 167-169 Derby Street, across from the Hawkes House, during demolition c. 1938. (Salem Maritime NHS)

in the neighborhood over the years.<sup>79</sup> Some Central Wharf tenants resisted eviction, but most of the buildings there and elsewhere within the new park’s boundaries were cleared by the end of 1938.<sup>80</sup> A pedestrian in 1939 would have seen a great deal of open space at the head of Derby Wharf where there had recently been densely-packed wooden and brick structures—an emerging environment that sought, in the words of the park’s 1939 Master Plan, to “recapture the spirit of [the] historic [maritime] period” of Salem’s history.<sup>81</sup> Participants in research for our project recalled that people in the neighborhood tended to be philosophical about the changes; in Mary Nowak’s words, “They had no say about it. They just moved away. They didn’t make a big fuss about it.” But photographs from the period also make it clear that for Poles, the creation of the national park entailed the loss of many familiar buildings of significance to their community.

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<sup>79</sup> “Polish Falcons Acquire Building at Corner of Cousins and English Streets To Be Used as Headquarter,” [Salem Evening News], March 1938, 1. With John Frayler files at Salem Maritime NHS.

<sup>80</sup> Friedlander, “Historical Research,” 189. Stuart Barnette listed and described 22 buildings slated for demolition. Chase-Harrell et al., “Administrative History,” 20 and see Stuart Barnette, Memorandum: Derby Wharf, Inspection of Buildings, 15 July 1937, file “SMNHS July-Dec. 1937, History Division, NPS, Washington DC.

<sup>81</sup> Chase-Harrell et al., “Administrative History,” 43, quoting the Master Plan, written by Edwin Small.



Figure 37 Head of Derby Wharf, partially cleared c. 1938, with the footprint of Kotarski Hall visible at left and the Polish Army Veterans Association of America clubhouse at top center, next to water. (Salem Maritime NHS)

East of the newly-cleared head of Derby Wharf, a familiar storefront—Alpers' Men's Wear—was now to be found on the first floor of St. Joseph Hall, where it had moved in 1935. The store remained in the Hall until 1947, a part of the memory of many people who grew up in the neighborhood.<sup>82</sup> Alpers followed other similar businesses who had occupied the Hall's ground floor, including the Derby Clothing Company (1922-1926) and a tailor named Anthony Hawryluk.

Across the street from the Hall was the Derby Furniture Company, whose owner, John Karbowniczak, was known in the neighborhood as "the millionaire of Derby Street."<sup>83</sup> At 150 Derby, the Polish Falcons, a fraternal organization, had settled in one of their many temporary homes. This was close to three of the small Polish groceries that lined Derby Street: Emil Mroz's store at 149 Derby, and just across from him, Peter Mysliwy at 148. Etta Groman (perhaps Grohman, who may have been related to the grocer with extra fingers who had once had a store in the building in front of the Hawkes House) ran a grocery at 147, and at 146 was the tailor Anthony Hawryluk, who had rented one of the St. Joseph Society's storefronts from 1929 to 1931.

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<sup>82</sup> Edward Carberg reports that Isidore Alpers lived at 22 Summit Street in South Salem in these years. (Carberg, "Rediscovering Salem Polonia.") Stanley Rybicki recalled that Alpers gave a free baseball bat to each boy who bought a new suit for the holidays.

<sup>83</sup> Reported by Karbowniczak's son Stanley, to John Frayler in the 2002 park survey of Poles with memories of the Derby Street neighborhood.



Figure 38 John Witkos in Witkos Market, 126 Derby Street, 1951. (Copy loaned to Salem Maritime NHS)

Witkos's Market, at 126 Derby, continued in business. Figure 38 shows John Witkos, probably the son of early St. Joseph Society member Marcin Witkos, standing behind the counter in April 1951. John was apparently known to many people in Salem as Mike Hogan, suggesting that even in the mid-twentieth century and even with a fairly straightforward Polish name, there were those who found it easier to Anglicize immigrant names.<sup>84</sup> John Witkos's nickname was so widely known that the bank would cash checks for him made out to Mike Hogan.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> The Anglicization of band leader Edward Wolkiewicz's name as Buddy Walker is another case in point.

<sup>85</sup> This information comes from the files of John Frayler, former Salelm Maritime NHS historian, who received the image in Figure 38 from by John A. Potorski of Peabody. Frayler's notes on the photo, based on the information provided by Potorski, state: "This is the interior of Witkos Market, 126 Derby St., John Witkos, owner. Calendar indicates April, 1951. John Witkos was also known as Mike Hogan, a nickname, but he used to be able to cash checks made out to Mike Hogan even though it was not officially his name. The bank had no problem doing so since they knew who he really was."



Figure 39 Witkos's Market was on the first floor of this building at 126 Derby Street, with two apartments above; the smaller building to the right was the location of Grabas the Caterer.

Another small grocery stood at 122 Derby Street. This was owned by Mary Nowak's father-in-law Frank, who made his living making kielbasa for the Polish stores in the city. Frank Nowak had previously worked at Joseph Kohn's store, but eventually opened his own business.<sup>86</sup> Mary recalled her own father, Gregory Halik, going into Nowak's store to buy candy to give to Mary's daughter, who was of course Nowak's grand-daughter as well as Halik's. Nowak insisted on providing the candy for free, while Halik insisted on paying for it, showing that there was some competition between two grandfathers over who was going to treat the little girl.

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<sup>86</sup> Mary recounted her annoyance at the erasure of this piece of Derby Street's history by contemporary tourist guides: "When you hire the trolley to go visit around Salem, when they go by there, there's one guy used to say, 'Here's the Salem Candy Store that's been here for sixty-five years!' And I was on that train and I said to my daughter-in—my son-in-law's wife, 'He's a damn liar—my father owned that store years ago. What the hell is he talking about?'"



Figure 40 122 Derby Street, former location of Frank Nowak's store.

Continuing east, more names appeared that remained familiar to Poles growing up in the neighborhood several decades later: the Gables Drug Company at 111 Derby, Samuel Jordan's grocery store at 99 Derby, and Rybicki's Provisions at 82, among many others. Although Derby Street was still "just like a little town" for Salem's Poles in many ways, the Depression years had brought many changes in and outside of the neighborhood. The continuing decline of industry in Salem and beyond, along with a second world war that many were already predicting, would bring many more as the century went on.





## CHAPTER FIVE

### BECOMING POLISH AMERICAN: TWO SITES OF TRANSITION

Like other Polish communities between the world wars, Polish Salem was filled with many kinds of change and negotiation about ethnic, national, and local identity. Out of a population once more sharply separated into different factions and backgrounds—rural and urban, German, Austrian, or Russian, traditional elites like priests or *szlachta* and the majority of people in the immigrant communities—a more cohesive sense of group identity was emerging.<sup>1</sup> More and more Poles were acquiring property, pursuing education beyond the elementary level, and participating in American politics as citizens and voters. The shaky Polish nation-state between the wars actively sought the support of these diaspora communities, and Poles' relationship with their homeland continued to play an important role in Polish American debates and organizations. But as the second generation began to come of age, there was increasingly a focus on America rather than Poland.<sup>2</sup> Some Poles in America, perhaps wearying of the fierce partisanship that characterized debates over the fate of Poland, even went so far as to adopt the slogan “*Wychodztwo dla Wychodztwa*,” or “The Emigrants for Themselves.”<sup>3</sup>

These changes and negotiations took place on every level in the community in Salem, from kitchen tables to bars to meeting halls. The interviews conducted for this study suggest that little of the specific content of second-generation debates and transformations remains in the memory of those who grew up after Polish Salem had become more thoroughly Americanized and assimilated. Yet those debates and activities clearly shaped the community. They were, in large part, what enabled the shift from being Polish to a sense of being Polish American, a shift that was taking place throughout “Polonia”—a term that was sometimes used to describe the Polish diaspora—roughly between the two world wars. This chapter will examine that shift through the histories of two sites in the Derby Street neighborhood: a brick building at 9 Daniels Street and

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<sup>1</sup> Lopata, *Polish Americans*, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Cygan, “Inventing Polonia: Notions of Polish American identity, 1870-1990.” *Prospects* 23 (1998), 220; Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 33.

<sup>3</sup> Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 67.

an old firehouse at the foot of Bentley Street, both of which served as gathering-places for a variety of Polish organizations and activities. Many of these began with the first generation of immigrants and continued into the third. But the main focus in this chapter is on the experiences of the second generation as it negotiated the multiple demands and opportunities of Polish ethnicity and nationalism along with the newer experiences of American citizenship and identity. These spaces and their occupants also illuminate some of the ways that Salem's Poles made decisions within changing gender identities, especially in relation to military service and democratic politics.

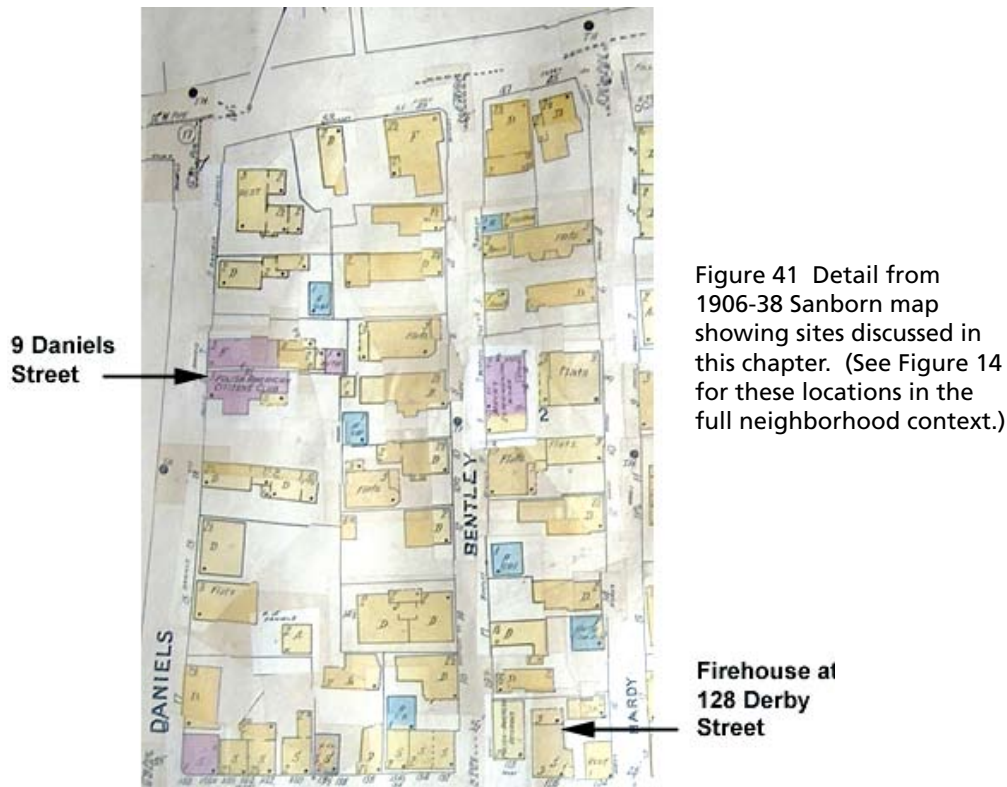


Figure 41 Detail from 1906-38 Sanborn map showing sites discussed in this chapter. (See Figure 14 for these locations in the full neighborhood context.)

## Men, Women, and Politics in Polish Salem: 9 Daniels Street

About halfway between Derby and Essex Street, in the heart of the Derby Street neighborhood, a pair of red brick buildings stands on the eastern side of Daniels Street. The southernmost building is unusual on this street of wooden residential homes both for its brick construction and its obvious identity as an organizational headquarters, considerably different from the days when it was a private home known as “The Graftons.”<sup>4</sup> The white letters on the red awning—“PLAV POST 55”—proclaim this

<sup>4</sup>“New Home of Polish-American Citizens Club is Dedicated,” Salem Evening News, April 20, 1928.

to be the home of Salem's Polish Legion of American Veterans, but the building's history as a part of the city's Polish community pre-dates the presence of the PLAV. To gain a deeper sense of the site's importance in Polish Salem, we need to return to the early days of the St. Joseph Society.



Figure 42 9 Daniels Street in 2009, now the home of the Polish Legion of American Veterans or PLAV.

By 1909, the Society had helped to found a Polish Catholic parish in Salem and had successfully constructed its own meeting hall at 160 Derby Street, a block to the west of Daniels Street. Since the minutes of the St. Joseph Society have been translated only up to that date, we have little detailed documentary evidence of the Society's decisions and activities in the next phase of its existence, but it seems very likely that one of its first projects—perhaps in conjunction with other Polish fraternal organizations in the city—was to help establish an organization that would encourage Polish immigrants to become American citizens, and to begin to assert a Polish political presence in the local area and beyond.<sup>5</sup>

As with the establishment of educational and religious institutions, it was often the community elites, frequently the second-wave German-partition immigrants, who took the lead in organizing others in the community. Not all of the immigrants, especially

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<sup>5</sup>The early minutes of the St. Joseph Society note that the mayor of Salem, John F. Hurley, visited the club more than once in its earliest days. At a September 1902 meeting he encouraged qualified immigrants to pursue American citizenship, and promised to support their applications.

those from more rural backgrounds, were eager to follow their lead. Mary Nowak's father was one example. As Mary recalled,

My father wasn't a citizen. He would not give up his citizenship of Austria. And he wouldn't let my mother, like ladies used to come and I used to help them to say the different words that the judge might ask about when they're getting their papers, so she knew all about it. So she wanted to, and my father said, "No, no, no, my wife isn't going to be an American citizen. We're in America, we do everything Americans have to do. I'll be honest, that's it."

However, many of the immigrants did actively seek American citizenship. A c.1911 newspaper article on the "Remarkable Progress of Poles in Salem" noted that the Polish community at that point numbered more than 3,500 people, including nearly 200 registered voters, and that "A new naturalization club, whose goal is to increase the number of the voters in the Polish colony of Salem, is about to be started by [Alexander] Kotarski and some of the other leaders," who hoped "to increase the number of Poles on the voting list."<sup>6</sup> Kotarski was no longer formally associated with the St. Joseph Society by that time, but it seems likely that he and other influential community leaders, including some who were more closely tied to the Society, were working together on this goal. As we have already seen, a Polish Naturalization Club was listed in 1912 at 80 Derby Street, the location of the grocery store run by Felix Rybicki, another community leader who was very involved in political and citizenship projects. The Polish American Citizens' Club (PACC) was not established under that name until 1916,<sup>7</sup> and between 1917 and 1926, it appears in the street listing at the same address as St. Joseph Hall, suggesting that in its first years, the club may have used space in the Hall for its meetings and perhaps operated under the aegis of the older mutual assistance organization.

Like the St. Joseph Society, though, the PACC seems to have been able to buy its own property within a few years of its founding. The brick house at 9 Daniels Street became its new headquarters in April of 1928, with a gala dedication ceremony attended by 250 club members as well as delegates from similar clubs in Ipswich, Lynn, Peabody, Lawrence and Haverhill and representatives of many other Polish organizations in

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<sup>6</sup> "Remarkable Progress of Poles in Salem," Salem Evening News, n.d. [1911?], House of Seven Gables Newsclippings 1909-April 1950, Box 1, News Clippings Scrapbook 1910-1916.

<sup>7</sup> Borkowski, "One Hundred Fifteen Years," 30.

Salem.<sup>8</sup> Teofil Bartnicki, then serving as District President of the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America, was the first speaker at the event, which perhaps indicates the somewhat parental relationship between the PRCUA and its local affiliate, the St. Joseph Society, and the more directly political PACC. We found little documentary evidence about the PACC during its earliest days, but it is clear that it eventually became a large and influential organization. In a 1978 interview, Julian Sztetala, one of the earliest Polish elected officials in Salem, recalled the club having five to six hundred members at its peak, and a 1950 photo of an installation dinner (Figure 43) shows a large turn-out. In addition to local membership, the presence of so many other groups at the dedication of its new home in 1928 suggests that the PACC, like the St. Joseph Society and other groups, had many overlapping ties with the various religious, cultural, political, military, and mutual assistance associations in the North Shore and eastern Massachusetts, all of which would have helped to strengthen its effectiveness in building a Polish American voting bloc in and around the city.



Figure 43 An installation dinner of the Polish American Citizens Club, January 8, 1950, at the Falcons Hall on Cousins Street. (Polish Legion of American Veterans)

Another key factor in this effectiveness was the establishment of a Women's Polish American Citizens Club in 1925. According to Wanda Walczak, one of the club's founders, people in the second generation of Poles in Salem were encountering persistent discrimination in hiring into the 1920s, despite their increasing education and

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<sup>8</sup> "New Home of Polish-American Citizens Club is Dedicated," Salem Evening News, April 20, 1928.

qualifications and the community's growing presence in the city. "The only obstacle," Walczak noted in her 1988 Polish festival speech, "seemed to be that they were of Polish descent." In response, community members and leaders turned their attention to the political arena, but with a new wrinkle: this time, women would be more actively involved in political organizing, voting, and leadership.

The answer we came up with was, the time has come when we must assert ourselves firmly, establish our rightful existence in the community and beyond. We were law-abiding people. We would not turn to violence to prove ourselves. Rather, we decided to proceed in a lawful and peaceful way, and we came to the conclusion that perhaps politics might be the answer. And lo and behold, at about that time, the women's suffragette movement succeeded in getting the law giving the women the right to vote. And the time was ripe for the women to organize, and the Women's Polish American Citizens Club came into being on November 15, 1925.

The purpose and goals of this club was to encourage the Polish women to learn the English language in order to prepare themselves to become naturalized American citizens. The officers and members canvassed the entire ward, going from house to house. Sometimes we met with opposition from the husbands, who felt that since they were citizens, there was no need for their wife to become a citizen. Our explanation to these men was that if we had more eligible voters in the ward, then perhaps our efforts to elect a Polish person to the city council could become a reality.

This strategic positioning of women as useful partners in political struggle reflects the way that Polish women of the second generation were reshaping their communities' ideas about gender roles in the period when primary immigration had slowed and young women who had been raised in the U.S. began to come of age.<sup>9</sup> In many cases, the creation of parallel or auxiliary women's organizations was a way to address, if not completely resolve, the tension between traditional views of women and the new demands and opportunities of industrial labor, democratic citizenship, mandatory education, and other facets of life in America. In the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America (PRCUA), for example, women-only societies were first established in 1899 and women constituted almost half the PRCUA membership by 1901, although there was no

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<sup>9</sup> Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 39.

official Women's Department in the organization overall until 1925.<sup>10</sup> The establishment of a women's political club in Salem followed this pattern.

While many Polish women and men supported women's public activity as a way to reinforce community morality and stability, others went considerably beyond this.<sup>11</sup> Many interviewees for this project spoke of the strength of Polish women and their central role not only in domestic and religious life but also in business, medicine, politics, and other "male" realms. We have already seen that in the textile industry in Salem, as in other industries where Polish women were employed, they were among the most vocal in asserting their rights as workers. Many interviewees recalled how their mothers or grandmothers used the money they earned by taking in boarders to purchase real estate for their own families, while others talked about women's importance as healers and midwives, particularly in the early days of the community. In an anecdote that reflects the humor and spirit of Salem's Polish women, Jane Davidowicz, born in Salem in 1915, along with her daughter Joan, recalled Jane's formidable mother-in-law:

*Jane:* My husband's mother, she was strict. Oh, she was a tough lady all right.

*Joan:* And she loved to move.

*Interviewer:* Oh no!

*Jane:* Yes.

*Joan:* He would say to her in the morning when he left for work, "Don't move." He would come home at night, like ten or eleven o'clock, he would go to the apartment, the curtains would be gone.

*Jane:* Everything's gone.

*Joan:* She would find an apartment that was cheaper. In those days it was the carts, the wagons and the horses. They had nothing, a table, a chair, the beds, and that was it. So she would put the money down on the apartment, and he would walk the neighborhood looking for the curtains. He would recognize the curtains and he would walk the neighborhood, looking for her curtains.

*Interviewer:* How many times did she move?

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<sup>10</sup> Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 55, 280. The Salem St. Joseph Society was all-male until at least 1909, the last year for which we have translated records of the organization. Translation of the remainder of the record book of the Society would be necessary to determine when women were admitted as members.

<sup>11</sup> Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 116. In his history of the PRCUA, Razilowski notes (p. 134) that the women's page of the organization's newspaper tended to emphasize women's domestic lives and their roles as spiritual and moral guardians, but that this was often at odds with women's actual experiences, which did find their way into the organization and its publications.



*Joan:* I mean, at least three or four times, that I heard about. And after that I think you stop counting. Because I was a great one to move and he used to always say to me, “Oh, my God, another one.”

*Jane:* Oh, his mother was a humdinger. Oh, she was.

*Joan:* She was tough. But she was a smart woman.

*Interviewer:* So she was just looking for a better deal?

*Joan:* Yeah. Yeah. And she was, I mean, she owned a piece of land, she bought land when she came here.

*Interviewer:* I also keep hearing that, I mean, women that are buying land in their own names—

*Joan:* Yeah. They built—I mean, she knew how to build a stone wall, I mean, it was just, you know, it was amazing. There’s nothing that they, that she couldn’t do.

It was this determined spirit that seems to be reflected in the 1925 creation of the Women’s Polish American Citizens Club in Salem. The group first gathered in Hedwiga Kohn’s living room above Kohns’ store next to St. Joseph Hall. As Mrs. Kohn recalled in 1978, “I had Mrs. Ostrowska and I had Mrs. Rybicka and I had Mrs. Robachewska and oh, there must have been a dozen of us. I invited them all to the house and we organized this [Women’s] Polish American Citizens Club.” Some leaders of the club belonged to the immigrant generation—for example, Franciszka Sobocinski, who had come to Salem with her husband Wladyslaw and her growing family of young children in the 1890s. Active in many church organizations and other groups, she was part of a leadership cadre that predated the period of heaviest immigration from Poland.

However, Hedwiga Kohn herself, along with many of the original organizers of the WPACC, was from the age group who had immigrated as very small children or been born very shortly after their families had arrived in America. Wanda Walczak was another of these; born in 1902 in Salem, she was among the first Polish children to grow up entirely in the U.S. Another early member of the WPACC was Mary Nowak, who was born in 1910 in Poland and who came to Salem in 1913. She served as the group’s treasurer for some time, and in her own approach to gaining her American citizenship, she exemplified the feistiness that many people pointed to as typical of Polish women of this generation, along with the changing mindset of the second generation:

When I got married, I married a fellow that was born and brought up here in Salem. Well, America. And he’d always say to me, “You’re lucky I married you, because now you can vote.” And I says, “Is that how I can vote, because of you?”

Who are you kidding? I'm going to go—" That's when I joined the American Citizens' Club, so that I could get my own papers. And I got my American citizenship papers with my name underneath. And...even though I was married to an American, I showed him!

Mary had the advantage of having grown up speaking both Polish and English, and it appears that she and other bilingual women were an important resource for those just learning the language. Many adults in the community went to evening school in order to learn English, often in connection with studying to pass their citizenship tests. Mary remembers helping some of these adult students: "Ladies used to come [to our home] and I used to help them to say the different words that the judge might ask about when they're getting their papers." Wanda Walczak noted that most of these women worked in the Pequot Mill, "and that was really a sacrifice for them to go to the school, but they did." According to Wanda in a 1978 interview, the women's group was energetic and well-organized from the outset:

When the women got organized, well, we had some very good workers and they went from house to house and recruited all the women...and if they weren't naturalized we'd write out their papers and—In fact, Mrs. Rybicki was a witness so many times that the back of her papers were so marked up there was no more space to mark for who she had been a witness for the naturalization.

Another long-standing member of the WPACC was a second-generation Salemite who came by her interest in political organization through her own family: Helen Olbrych, daughter of Teofil Bartnicki. Helen's daughter, Linda Moustakis, remembers family members encouraging Helen to become involved in the Polish clubs. Helen joined the WPACC and eventually rose to serve as its president for many years (see Figure 45). In Linda's recollection, the political aspects of the club's work were intertwined with its social roles, including its important function as a support network for women in Salem's Polish community. "The women would band together," she said. "They were a good source of support for each other."<sup>12</sup> She noted that her mother's network of women

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<sup>12</sup> Mary Patrice Erdmans presents a very similar portrait of her mother and aunts, who grew up in the mid-twentieth century when women's roles were still largely defined by Church, home, and motherhood. Erdmans notes that the women in her family "did not disrupt the balance of power, but they did create private worlds based somewhat on a set of values that ran counter to those that dominate public space." Those values included emotional connectedness with others and a vision of community as a close-knit and mutually supportive network of relationships. See Mary Patrice Erdmans, *The Grasinki Girls: The Choices They Had and the Choices They Made* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004), 8.

friends occasionally held light-hearted gatherings where they dressed up and had fun, expressing a different side of Polish American community organizing. This penchant for dressing up—perhaps even for countering the seriousness of some of the male-dominated organizations’ expressions of Polish politics and culture—can be seen in a 1926 photo of Helen and her sisters dressed as the “Three Musketeers,” in which Helen is wearing her father’s drill uniform (as shown in Figure 24).



Figure 44 Jane, Helen (later Olbrych), and Alice Bartnicki (Lepkowski) pose as the “Three Musketeers” in 1926; Helen is wearing her father’s St. Joseph Society drill team uniform (see Figure 24). (Linda Moustakis.)

The WPACC shared the brick building at 9 Daniels Street with the all-male PACC, and the Polish American voting bloc that emerged from their combined efforts in the middle decades of the twentieth century was active and quite cohesive—about 1,200 solidly Democratic votes at its peak, in Richard Swiniuch’s recollection. Two or three Poles had run for city council as representatives of Ward 1 before the mid-1920s, but local Irish-American politicians retained their hold on the seat until 1927, when Felix Irzyk was elected.<sup>13</sup> Wanda Walczak gave a good deal of the credit for his victory to the organizing efforts of Salem’s Polish women, who were able to connect with and support considerable numbers of new citizens and voters. Walczak herself became very active in state and local Democratic politics, serving on the Salem School Committee from 1948 to 1952 and playing a role in political organizing and advocacy at many levels. In what was clearly one

<sup>13</sup> Borkowski, “One Hundred Fifteen Years,” 33.

of her proudest moments, she spoke up on behalf of a delegation of Polish Americans who had gone to the State House in the mid-1930s to meet with then-governor James Curley about an issue involving the state's Industrial Accident Board. When an aide informed them that the group could just leave a message for the governor, Walczak told him sharply, "The time is past when you shut foreigners in a corner," and was rewarded by being ushered in immediately to the governor's office, where she received a hearing, a compliment for her forthrightness, and an autographed photo of Curley.<sup>14</sup>



Figure 45 The 1959 installation of officers of the Women's Polish-American Citizens Club: (left to right) Alyce Maleck, financial secretary; Albina Nester, treasurer; Czeslawa Zmijewska, vice president; Helen Olbrych, president; Wanda Walczak, honorary president; Lillian Pszenny, recording secretary. (Lynn Telegram-News, Feb. 8, 1959)

Many Polish political candidates in Salem met with similar success after the community organized behind their campaigns. Felix Irzyk served three years on the Salem city council, from 1927-1930, and was then elected to the Massachusetts state House of Representatives, where he served for a number of years.<sup>15</sup> A number of other Salem Poles

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<sup>14</sup> Wanda Walczak related this story in both her 1978 oral history interview with youth from the House of Seven Gables and in her 1988 speech at a Polish festival in Salem.

<sup>15</sup> Borkowski, "One Hundred Fifteen Years," 33.

followed. Adam Stefanski was on the city council from 1936-43, Irzyk's brother-in-law Julian Szetala from 1944-51, and Walter Twarog from 1958-59.<sup>16</sup> Louis Swiniuch was a city councilor for many years, between 1955 and 1957 and again between 1962 and 1971.

Like many of his fellow Polish Americans, Louis Swiniuch was a Democrat with a strongly working-class orientation. Swiniuch's son Richard articulated that political approach as

They were for the working people and we were the working people. And there's no question about it—the Republicans were the people that lived on Chestnut Street. They had piles and piles of money and could care less about us. They had cars—my grandmothers were walking home from the markets, supermarkets, they didn't have then—walking home in the snow and everything from the Pequot Mills, okay, you know? We had nothing, and they came in and believed in it, the people, you know. And they still do, and I still believe in it, although they drift off the golden path sometimes!

Other Polish American politicians from Salem include Thaddeusz Buczko, who was a city councilor for Ward 4 (not a predominantly Polish ward) from 1956 to 1959 and was later Massachusetts State Auditor.<sup>17</sup> George Nowak, Mary Nowak's son, served on the city council in the late 1980s, and Louis Swiniuch's son Richard followed in his father's footsteps by running for office, winning election three separate times, from 1973 to 1977, 1981 to 1986, and 1989 to 1991. Richard credits his father's influence on his own interest in politics:

Basically, he was my idol. And I liked his liberal views and the Democratic policies that he professed. And he didn't profess them around the house—he wasn't one of these flying nuts, you know, that say, "Oh, this one's no good"—he never said that about anybody, you know. So I just pursued him, to the point when I was like 16 or 17, I had a car with studded snow tires on the back, just a junk car, you know, and I used to take him around to the different spots in the ward to see if they were plowing snow or if there was a catastrophe we went somewhere—So I took, I would take him. I meet a lot of people, you know. A lot of them were surprised that—what are you doing here? I said, "I'm helping my father!" Really, you know. So I learned a lot about that through him.

Peter LaChapelle, who grew up in the neighborhood slightly later than Richard Swiniuch, also found political involvement exciting as a young man. He recalls the

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<sup>16</sup> Borkowski, "One Hundred Fifteen Years," 34.

<sup>17</sup> Borkowski, "One Hundred Fifteen Years," 34.

continued involvement of the Rybicki family in Salem's Polish political world, along with the tight interconnections among the different kinds of groups and organizations in the community:

My next door neighbor, Edward Rybicki, now deceased, was a ward boss. And as a young boy how I got interested in things political and how things actually worked, I grew up with his son James Rybicki, and we would pass out brochures up and down this neighborhood for the Democratic candidate for governor. . . . We would walk up and down the streets and you would put the stuff in the doorknob. But they would ask you in the neighborhood, "Who sent you here?" And you would say, "Edward Rybicki." "Okay. Okay." And his living room, over the house, was like whatever the political campaign was, was just stuffed. We'd have to go out and put up these lawn signs and bumper stickers, and thousands of these things. And what we got for a reward is we'd be invited to the victory party for the winning candidate or the non-victory party. Some of them would be at the hotel, others would be in this hall. . . . You've got to remember, too, there were many social clubs. St. Joseph's Hall, there was the Falcons club, they would rent space and they would have these parties. I mean, they would be packed. Packed. And in the old days they didn't have the computer, they'd be getting the tallies and the votes, Ward 1, Precinct 1, you know, 300, 200. And the people would be watching this stuff. It was an exciting time.

Because the meeting space in the brick building at 8 Daniels Street was limited, larger gatherings—like election-night parties or the kind of installation dinners shown in Figures 43 and 45—were held at the larger social halls in the neighborhood, often the Polish Falcons. At the WPACC's 1959 installation dinner (see Figure 45), its President, Helen Olbrych, reported that the club's membership stood at 450. Speakers included several Salem Poles who were active as political representatives or officials, including City Solicitor Alfred Dobrosielski, city councillors Thaddeus Buczko and John Twarog, and former (and future) councillor Louis Swiniuch. Helen's brother, Edward Bartnicki, sang the national anthems of the U.S. and Poland, among other songs.<sup>18</sup> Officers were sworn in by a curate from St. John the Baptist parish, showing the close connection that remained between spiritual, political, and other realms of the Polish community. And those connections extended out into the wider political world as well. A frequently-told story in Polish Salem is of how John F. Kennedy made a campaign stop at the Falcons Hall, while the political clubs sometimes travelled outside the city—for example, the WPACC

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<sup>18</sup> "Women's Citizens Club Officers are Installed at Falcons Auditorium." *Lynn Telegram-News*, Feb. 8, 1959.

made at least one trip to Washington, D.C.<sup>19</sup> The building at 9 Daniels Street, then, was an important node in the overlapping networks that were steadily strengthening and extending the presence of Poles in Salem, the larger area, and the nation.

Military service is another means by which Poles became more embedded in the life of the American nation, and as noted at the start of this chapter, the building at 9 Daniels Street is now the home of the Polish Legion of American Veterans, a group that reflects a different aspect of the community. The PLAV, like many of the organizations in the neighborhood, has occupied various locations in its history, and we will now turn to one of those: the old firehouse at the foot of Bentley Street.

### **Singing and Soldiering: The Firehouse at 128 Derby Street**

Another node in Salem's Polish American network was the former firehouse on the northeast corner of Derby and Bentley Streets. Sometime around 1930, this small wooden building was taken out of city service and became a meeting-place for various Polish groups, including the Polish Falcons in the early 1920s, the Chopin Choral Society in the later 1920s and 1930s, and veterans' groups starting in the 1940s.<sup>20</sup> We discovered little information about the early history of the Falcons in Salem, but we were able to learn more about two of the groups that used the firehouse: the Chopin Choir and the Polish Legion of American Veterans. The histories of these two organizations can give us glimpses of some of the cultural and commemorative expressions produced by Poles in Salem in the middle decades of the twentieth century.

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<sup>19</sup> It was not entirely clear from community members' recollections when Kennedy's visit took place. Some people recalled it being during a Senatorial campaign (which would have been 1952 or 1958), while others thought it was during one of his campaigns for the House of Representatives (1946, 1948, or 1950).

<sup>20</sup> Richard Swiniuch recalls the Polish Legion of American Veterans renting the firehouse from the city for a dollar a year, so the building seemingly remained in the city's ownership even after the Polish organizations began using it. The street directories show the "Veteran Firemen Association" listed through 1917, then the Independent Order of Falcons from 1918-1926 (along with the White Angel Fire Station from 1922 to 1926), no listing between 1929 and 1932, and then the Polish Chopin Choral Society beginning in 1933-34.

## The Chopin Choir

Salem's Chopin Choir was one of many similar groups in Polish America in this period.<sup>21</sup> The early nineteenth-century pianist and composer was a cultural hero for many Poles, not only for his musical fame but for his association with the nationalist struggles of the partition era. In the period between the world wars, when Poland was briefly independent but already threatened again by the geopolitics of an uneasy Europe, the music of Chopin, like the poetry of Mickiewicz and other expressions of elite Polish culture, served as an important symbol of past Polish glories and—it was hoped—a lasting future as a free nation. Polish nationalists in Europe and abroad promoted it that way as part of their efforts to mobilize emigrant support for the fragile Polish state. At the same time, local leaders in immigrant communities found Polish high culture useful in a number of ways. At a time when Poles were often associated in Americans' minds with the heaviest kinds of labor in the industrial U.S., promoting cultured expressions was a way to resist ugly stereotypes of Poles as an unlettered under-class. Along with combating discrimination and asserting a Polish presence on the American cultural landscape, groups like the choral societies served as meeting-places for Poles themselves, in which a sense of a unified national and ethnic identity could be created and reinforced.<sup>22</sup>

Salem's Chopin Choir itself is long gone and research for this study found few documentary records or community members who recalled it. But the long memory of former chorister Mary Nowak, along with some secondary evidence about similar second-generation Polish choral societies, helps us to understand some of the roles that these groups played for their members and audiences. A photo of the group, likely around 1930, gives a clear sense that the Chopin Choir was a serious, formal endeavor (Figure 46). The twenty men wear tuxedos and black ties, the twelve women are dressed in white and wear rose corsages. At the center of the group is its conductor, a Mr. Nurczynski. Like Hedwiga Kohn and her family, the Romaszkieviczes, Nurczynski was from the well-to-do Boston suburb of Newton, marking him in Mary's memory as

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<sup>21</sup> Blejwas, "To Sing Out the Future," Obidinski and Zand, *Polish Folkways in America*, 50-51. Following the pattern of national umbrella organizations developing to coordinate local and regional efforts, the Polish Singers Alliance of America was founded in 1889 and comprised 62 choirs with over 3,000 members by World War I. New England's choirs split off from this national group to form their own regional association at around this time, but rejoined in 1937, when the national membership had grown to more than 100 choirs (Blejwas, "To Sing Out the Future").

<sup>22</sup> Cygan, "Inventing Polonia," 228-29.



*szlachta*—belonging to an elite class of Poles. “We used to think that the people from Newton were the high muckamucks,” Mary said. She recalled Nurczynski as being

a tough guy. He was a good teacher. Oh, he was a great singer. And we’d giggle if, you know, like the tenors, the guys would sit there and the sopranos and this—he had a good arrangement, you know, and we’d be talking, talking, and then like when it started, you know, we’d have to be quiet. And he’d just stand there and he’d just look around, make sure that everybody was ready and quiet. And then he’d say, “*Tenore, tenore, och-naya*,” *tenore* means the tenors—get going, we’re going to start with the tenors. And then the basses, and then the women, on this side, you know, and if somebody was, like you’d look around at one of them and say something, he’d say, “Not now! You can look at them later!” He’d notice everything.



Figure 46 Salem’s Chopin Choral Society, c. 1930; Mary Nowak is second woman from right in front row, with woman identified as Jane Witkos third from right and conductor Nurczynski in center between rows of women. (Salem Maritime NHS)

Mary herself, like most of the young people of her generation, came from a more working-class or peasant background, and in her sketch of the rehearsal atmosphere, we can see how “high” culture may have been used in part to educate high-spirited second-generation youth about the importance of their inherited culture. Most of the members

were young and heterosexual, but some were not. Mary recalled, “There were a couple of old—we used to call them, they were bachelors. And we just considered them just another guy. They were, you know, friends.”

At the same time, it is clear that these chaperoned activities involving young Polish Americans were also seen as social events where youth could meet each other in a supervised setting. “It was a place to go,” Mary said. “It was a hang-out. But it was under supervision, so the parents knew where we were.” In fact, it was through the Chopin Choir that Mary met the man who would become her husband, Antony Nowak. One of the choir’s songs was an arrangement of a Polish folksong called “*Antek na harmionii gra*” (“Antek plays the accordion”). Because the boy in the song—Antek, short for Antony—is in love with a girl named Mary,

when he’d walk in, they’d start singing, and they’d include me in it. And I’d say, “I don’t know that guy. He’s short. I don’t know him.” But who am I to say, I got a big nose, and all these pretty girls are walking around! So first thing you know, Antek is the only one that owns a car! So there are dance halls around in Saugus, in South Peabody—you can’t get to them unless you have a car. So what did they do? Well, Antek is, you know, is attached with Mary—“Antek, ask Mary to go to the dance.” Mary and Antek are going to the dance. But guess what? Mary wants a dance, but Antek doesn’t dance. I have to sit outside with him and talk or sit in the car and do a little coo-coo! So I said. . . I’m not going out with him any more. I’m sitting there, all my friends are dancing. Little by little—I says, “I’m not going out with you any more, not this and that.” But little by little we were getting closer and closer.

They eventually married and had four children.

The choir performed for Polish occasions in Salem and also in choral festivals and competitions with other choirs from around the region. Mary recalls performing at Boston’s Symphony hall and in Rhode Island, and remembers “we won all the prizes when we went.” According to Mary, all of the singers could read music, a skill that was taught in the Polish school and honed through singing in church from an early age. Typically, the repertoire of Polish choral societies like the Chopin Choir was “Polish and patriotic,”<sup>23</sup> and concert programs usually opened with the national anthem, “*Boże cos Polske*,” and closed with another patriotic number, “*Jeszcze Polska nie zginela*.” Programs often included music by Chopin, the twentieth-century Polish pianist and cultural/

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<sup>23</sup> Blejwas, “To Sing Out the Future.” Unless otherwise cited, all general information about Polish choral societies is from this article. This article was found in electronic format only and page numbers were not included.

political leader Paderewski, operatic composers, and others. Folk music, like the Mary and Antek song, was also often on programs, but usually in stylized form, much as African American spirituals began to be performed in concert settings in the U.S. in this period.

The late 1920s and 1930s were the peak period for Polish American choral societies. In 1939, a national organization of Polish choruses included more than a hundred choirs with over three thousand active members, and these groups performed often at patriotic fundraisers and rallies during World War II. But as with many other aspects of Polish life in America, the war changed things drastically for the singing groups. The absence of so many young men during the war and the many changes wrought by new patterns of living and working in the 1950s spelled the end of many of the choral societies, apparently including Salem's. The Chopin Choir seems to have shared the old firehouse space with the Polish American Veterans Association in 1941, but by 1945 the space was listed as vacant in the street directory, and after the war it was occupied by quite a different group: the Polish Legion of American Veterans. It may be that there was some overlap in membership of the two organizations, and that some of the young men who performed in the Chopin Choir also served during the war, only to return to a neighborhood that was beginning to change drastically from the one that earlier Poles had settled into and made their own.

## **Polish Veterans and the PLAV**

Bob Spychalski's father was a PLAV member who served as an officer in the group and later as the national PLAV commander. Bob vividly recalled the period of the firehouse's existence when it housed the veterans' group, and his own visits to the building with his father:

The side door, entrance, was on Bentley Street, because obviously the front doors would have opened to Derby Street. When you came in, you were towards the back of the building. There was a stairway that went upstairs to a hall upstairs, which was the whole second floor. And when you came to the right, you came into the bar. And there was a kind of a long, L-shaped bar and there were tables. It was small but it was home to the PLAV... I spent many an hour in there, that and amongst other facilities, drinking Coca Cola and eating peanuts and chips. And my nickname was "Peanuts" amongst some of the old guys, because if I was being a pest, they'd give me a nickel, I'd go over to the pistachio machine, get my peanuts and sit down, and you wouldn't hear from me until I was out of peanuts.

Nationally, the PLAV was formed in 1931 out of a number of different World War I veterans' groups.<sup>24</sup> Military service had been by no means a straightforward matter for those veterans. Some had enlisted primarily to fight for Poland's independence from the three occupying empires that were now at war with one another on a large scale. Many of these men had joined the Polish war effort directly.<sup>25</sup> 38,000 American Poles enlisted in Polish army units mustered in Europe and Canada.<sup>26</sup> Others joined the U.S. military. In a time when their loyalty was questioned by many Americans, this was a way to prove their allegiance to America while still supporting Poland's goal of independence.<sup>27</sup> Others saw their service during World War I as primarily to America itself, rather than to Poland. In Salem, these World War I veterans included one of the sons of immigrant Wladyslaw Sobocinski, Felix, named for the uncle who had been the first member of the family to come to the U.S. Young Felix Sobocinski served in the 101<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery regiment and was cited for bravery during the war.<sup>28</sup> Polish American communities enthusiastically

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<sup>24</sup> Polish Legion of American Veterans (PLAV). "PLAV History" (2007) Accessed online <http://www.plav.org/plavhist.htm>.

<sup>25</sup> 215,000 Polish Americans served the U.S. during World War I, while a smaller but still significant number—38,000 in total—enlisted in Polish army units that were mustered outside of Poland itself, including in Canada. See Magda, *The Polish Presence*, 45; Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 157, 162-63. Those who opted to fight directly for Poland included 22,000 who served in what was known as "Haller's Blue Army," a combined force of exiles and expatriates See Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 67; Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 156). As was the case later in World War II, Polish Americans served and died in numbers disproportionate to their presence in the overall American population during World War I, when they made up 4% of the U.S. population but constituted 12% of the nation's war dead. (See Magda, *The Polish Presence*, 45).

<sup>26</sup> The artifacts of the St. Joseph Society at Salem Maritime NHS include a very large framed photo of a World War I training camp at "Niagara." This was probably "Butler's Barracks" (christened Camp Kosciuszko during the Polish recruits' residence there) in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. (<http://culturalniagara.com/butlersbarracks.html>) The presence of this photo suggests that the St. Joseph Society, like most other organizations in Polish America, was actively involved in raising money and supporting the Polish Army.

<sup>27</sup> As we have already seen in Chapter Four, Poles' position in relation to these powers sometimes got them into difficulties once America joined the war in 1917. The intense anti-German nationalism of most Americans left no room for Poles to insist that for them, Russia was the more fearsome enemy, or that the Prussians and Germans might be a useful check on Russia's influence in Eastern Europe.

<sup>28</sup> "Daniels Street Couple Observing Their 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary," no publication name, no date (c. 1936). Sobocinski family records.

supported their soldiers in these various armies, buying Liberty Bonds and raising money in tremendous amounts disproportionate to their wealth as a mostly working-class population.<sup>29</sup>

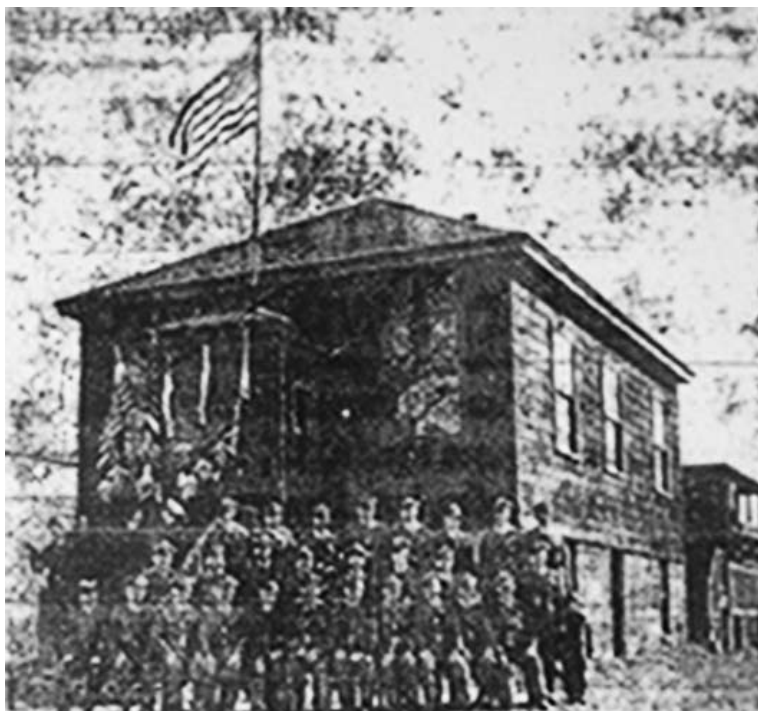


Figure 47 Members of the Polish American Veterans Association (PAVA) at their soon-to-be-vacated home, November 1937. (Salem Evening News, Nov. 13, 1937; photo reprinted courtesy of The Salem News)

At some point in 1918, the name of Salem's Grant Street—the short street running from St. Joseph Hall down to the water, formerly known as Tucker's Wharf—was changed to Kosciusko Street, after one of the Revolutionary War heroes who laid the foundation for a sense of proud Polish connection and “surrogate roots” in the U.S.<sup>30</sup> Although research for this study did not uncover any specific information about the changing of the street name, its location in the center of the Polish neighborhood makes it reasonable to

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<sup>29</sup> Radzilowski reports that Polish American communities purchased almost \$100 million worth of U.S. Liberty Bonds during World War I, as well as raising more than \$50 million for Polish relief and \$1.5 million for the Polish Army. The PRCUA coordinated and facilitated these efforts. (Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 159-61)

<sup>30</sup> See Wiecezszak, “Pre- and Proto-Ethnics,” 12 on the importance of these figures in the time before the heaviest Polish immigration to the U.S.

suppose that the name change reflected a desire to express the community's patriotism at a time when many Americans were questioning it. The symbolic association with Kosciusko also made a connection with the idea that fighting for freedom anywhere in the world was an expression of Polish faith in the virtues of republican government, an idea that motivated many nineteenth and twentieth century Polish freedom fighters.<sup>31</sup>

Memories of World War I are sketchy among Salem's Poles. Fred Korzeniewski, whose father came from Poland as a young man shortly before the First World War, remembers that his father "went back to Poland to fight for the Polish army" in the war. He had already met Fred's mother at a carnival in Salem, and asked her to wait for him until he returned from the war. When he did, they married and started a family, and Fred's father became a member of the Salem post of Polish World War I veterans—likely the Polish Army Veterans Association of America, or PAVA, who seem to have shared space briefly with the Chopin Choir in the old firehouse at the foot of Bentley Street. This group previously occupied a building at the foot of Kosciusko Street, which was taken as part of the creation of Salem Maritime NHS.<sup>32</sup>

It is not clear whether Fred Korzeniewski's father was a part of the contingent of Poles from America who enlisted directly in Poland. The 22,000 Poles from America who did so found themselves greatly disillusioned after the war, when the newly independent Polish government essentially abandoned them and they had to rely on help from the American government to return to the U.S. It may be that Fred's lack of awareness of the saga reflects the bitterness over this episode and the increasing orientation to the U.S. by many immigrant Poles after the First World War. Fred does not recall very much discussion of Poland or Polish politics when he was growing up in the 1930s and 1940s, the period in which many Poles in America were beginning to see themselves as an ethnic community quite separate from their homeland. The contested politics of the new Polish state continued to be reflected in Salem's Derby Street neighborhood—one of PAVA's

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<sup>31</sup> Lukowski and Zawadski, *Concise History*, 172.

<sup>32</sup> A newspaper article from November 1937 shows a group of about 30 veterans standing by the steps of the Kosciusko Street building and notes, "The veterans have been there so long that they wanted to have some visual remembrance of the building, so after the Armistice parade they posed in front of the structure." According to the paper, the city planned to move the building to the Collins Cove playground. "Polish-American veterans to move to new quarters; Building taken for park." *Salem Evening News*, November 13, 1937, p. 2. In Figure 37, this building can be seen still standing after most of the other buildings in the Derby Wharf area have been taken down for the new national park.

neighbors at the foot of Kosciuszko Street was the KON Club, a socialist group aligned with the left-leaning national government, and as we have already seen, politically-minded Poles from Salem, like Teofil Bartnicki in his role as a courier between the U.S. and Poland, sometimes found themselves caught up in the continued Eastern European violence after World War I. But specific memories of these struggles and organizations do not seem to have endured in the community.



Figure 48 Polish Legion of American Veterans, c. 1948, in front of the firehouse at Bentley and Derby Streets. (Joseph Kulik)

It seems possible that PAVA moved into shared space in the old firehouse when its building was taken for the national park in 1937, but it may also be that the group was already shifting into its newer identity as the Polish Legion of American Veterans, a more explicitly U.S.-oriented organization that took on the “Legion” designation used by other American veterans’ groups. In 1945, there is no tenant listed for the firehouse in the street directory, probably reflecting the fact that so many of the younger men were away serving

in the military and that the older groups like the Chopin Choral Society had faded with the coming of the war. In 1948, though, the PLAV is listed as being in residence, entering into a period of about two decades when it used the old wooden firehouse as its home. Figure 48 shows a PLAV group in front of the old firehouse shortly after World War II.



Figure 49 Bentley Street looking south in the late 1940s; the firehouse at 128 Derby Street is visible (building with bell tower). (Joseph Kulik)

During this period, Polish American ethnic identity in Salem was solidifying into something more rooted in America. When Germany invaded Poland in 1939, Polish Americans again responded quickly with relief efforts. After the U.S. entered the war in 1941, they again engaged in recruitment and fundraising on a massive scale.<sup>33</sup> This time, American patriotism and support for Poland were much more easily reconciled; the soldiers were Americans fighting against those who had destroyed the Polish nation-state,

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<sup>33</sup> Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 211-12.



a much less ambivalent role than Poles had had in World War I.<sup>34</sup> After the war, though, there was another sense of having been betrayed—this time by the U.S., which acquiesced to Soviet plans at Yalta and essentially handed Poland to one of its traditional adversaries. Bitterness over Yalta shaped the staunch anti-Communism of many in Polonia in the Cold War years.<sup>35</sup>

Nationally, Polish American World War II veterans were joined in this era by many military veterans from the Polish military. About 40,000 of these came to the U.S. after the war, and many joined existing PLAV posts.<sup>36</sup> One of these was Tadeusz (“Teddy”) Goclowski, currently the commander of PLAV Post No. 55 in Salem. Poles in Salem were also active in helping to resettle some of the many “Displaced Persons” who came to the U.S., often after being liberated from concentration camps.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 215. The St. Joseph Society artifacts at Salem National NHS include a wooden Honor Roll listing the members of the Society who served during World War II: Czeslaw Bartnicki, Tadeusz Bartnicki, Wacław Bartnicki, Stanisław Boltrukiewicz, Zygmunt Dobrzeński, Jan Dolmat, Alfons F. Drankowski, Alfons Ezmunt, Bolesław Falkowski, Aleksander Grabowski, Franciszek C. Koczalka, Ryszard K. Kozankiewicz, Josef Luzinski, Mieczysław S. Nicgorski, Czesław J. Nicgorski, Adolf Pszenny, Czesława Pszenny, Edmund R. Pszenny, Henryk Pszenny, Jan A. Pszenny, Josef J. Pszenny, Wiktor Pszenny, Teofil Rogalski, Franciszek W. Siergiej, Bolesław Swiniarski, Henryk Symbarski, Josef Wansiewski, Stanisław F. Welenc, Jan J. Zdancewicz, Ludwik J. Spychalski, Stephan Czarnecki, Henryk Mielcarz, Józef A. Kielbasa, Edmund Zdanowicz, and Jan Twarog.

<sup>35</sup> Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 127; Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 230, 240.

<sup>36</sup> Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 93.

<sup>37</sup> About 150,000 Poles came to the U.S. between 1945 and 1969 after the American government passed eight special acts to allow for the admittance of “Displaced Persons.” Many of them settled with sponsor families, particularly in areas with large existing Polish-American populations. See Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 93-95; Lopata, *Polish Americans*, 38. Dorothy Stupakiewicz of Salem reports that her uncle Ted (Thaddeus), who later taught theatrical design at Vassar College, obtained his first teaching job at what was then North Adams State College in Massachusetts, teaching refugees who had come from concentration camps and who spoke no English, while Salem itself hosted a number of Displaced Persons in the postwar years.

In her mid-1970s research on Poles in Salem, Salem State College student Elizabeth Borkowski spoke with a number of Polish former refugees who had come to the city after World War II. One woman, Małgorzata Kura, told Borkowski that she and her family had been sponsored by an order of Polish nuns in Louisiana, but had discovered on arriving in Boston that the nuns were unable to finance the rest of the trip, so the Kuras had stayed in Massachusetts. Other refugees had gone back to Poland but then returned to the U.S. because life in the homeland was still so difficult. These immigrants tended to be older than was typical of the earlier twentieth century arrivals. The newer people were also more often professionals who generally associated with other well-educated Poles, something that distanced them socially from the earlier migrants who were generally more working-class and who often resented the newcomers’ assumption that they would step immediately into elite or leadership roles. On Displaced Persons in Salem, See Borkowski, “One Hundred Fifteen Years,” 21-23; in general, see Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 95.



Figure 50 Eddie Luzinski is installed as commander of the Salem PLAV post in 1967, with a kiss from Ladies Auxilliary president Ellie Crowley and watched over by Thaddeus Kosciuszko from the wall behind. (Polish Legion of American Veterans)

One of the activities of the post-World-War II PLAV shows how its activities came to resemble those of many other “mainstream” American organizations after the war. Between 1948 and about 1954, the group sponsored a drum and bugle corps which competed in regional and national competitions. According to PLAV member Richard Swiniuch, the corps had about 60 members who were coached by experienced drummers and buglers from the post. Describing the group’s return from trips to competitions, Richard recalled the community’s pride in the young performers and the blending of Polish and American music that they played:

You know, they talk about the, how Poles think of things, okay, how proud we are of ourselves, not individually but you know, collectively. They would get off the bus, down at Rowley Plaza, get all their gear out of the buses and start marching down Derby Street. They would be playing the Polish national anthem coming down the street, okay. And then they would play some other songs as well, okay? And the people would be standing along the side of the street, out the second story windows, third story windows, cheering them on. . . They did it all the time. And if they won something, oh, God, the whole city was down the street waiting for them. And the stuff they played, you know, was simple, you could understand it. . . “Sweet Georgia Brown” and all kinds of stuff. “Yankee Doodle Dandy” and—those are the old things, you know. . . [T]hey had to play everything, not just the ethnic thing, you know.

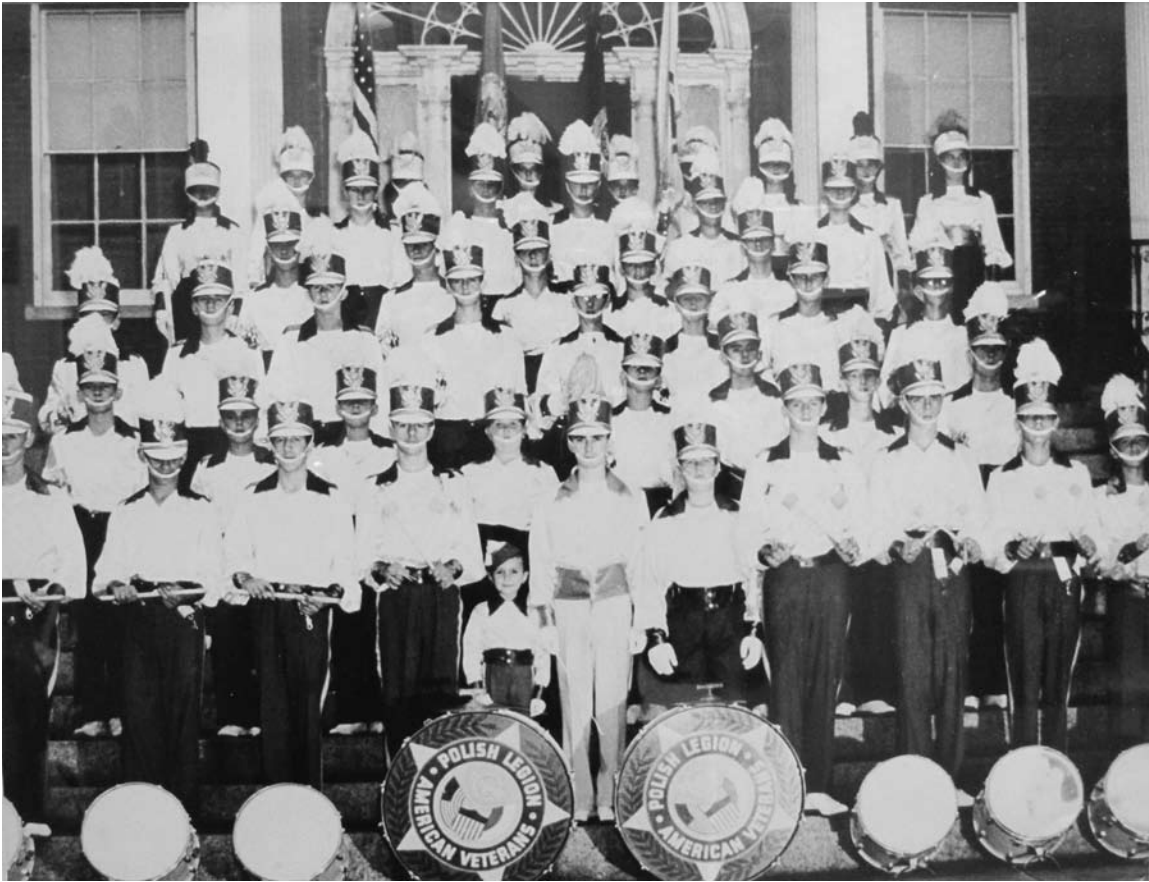


Figure 51 Polish Legion of American Veterans drum and bugle corps on the steps of the Salem Custom House, c. 1953. (Richard Swiniuch)

Like the St. Joseph Society drill team, the PLAV group drew on military and paramilitary traditions, and like most of the older groups, it was largely divided along gender lines, with the girls serving as the color guard and the boys performing on the drums and bugles.<sup>38</sup> Unlike the Chopin Choir, which presented Polish high culture as a way of asserting a specifically Polish presence and countering images of the immigrants as uncultured, the PLAV drum and bugle corps made a statement that the community was now fully a part of Salem and of American society. As this new generation was coming of age, much had changed, as we will see in more detail in the following chapter.

To conclude this chapter, we return to where we started—the brick building at 9 Daniels Street. Sometime in the mid- to late 1960s, the old firehouse at the foot

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<sup>38</sup> Richard Swiniuch also recalled helping to organize an all-girl drum corps, the Arbellas, in Salem.

of Bentley Street burned down, leaving the PLAV homeless.<sup>39</sup> By that time, it seems that the Polish American Citizens Club had become smaller and less active, a pattern that was beginning to be seen throughout the network of Polish organizations in the city and beyond in this period. According to founder Wanda Walczak, the Women's Polish American Citizens Club remained active at least into the 1980s, when she and other members assisted a family of Polish political refugees who had fled Lodz after the imposition of martial law in 1981.<sup>40</sup> The WPACC is officially in existence, although not currently active. Even by the 1960s, the PACC and WPACC were dwindling in size and energy, making the headquarters at 9 Daniels Street a much less busy and vital place than it had once been. The PLAV chose the building for its new home, where it remains today

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<sup>39</sup> There was disagreement among our sources about the exact year for the fire, and no documentation was found to give a firm date. Richard Swiniuch recalls that the fire took place after a "Valentine's party for the kids, and somebody behind the bar, one of the bartenders, in the plastic trash barrels, dumped cigarettes in there, then everybody went home." The street directory listings, while not exact, suggest that the fire may have occurred in 1966. There are also discrepancies in accounts of where the PLAV went immediately after the fire. The PLAV's own website dates the fire to 1965 and notes that the post moved to Kosciusko Street for three years and then to 9 Daniels Street in 1968. Bob Spychalski also recalls the progression being from the firehouse to Kosciusko Street to Daniels Street.

<sup>40</sup> During the 1980s, as the Solidarity-led movement struggled to overturn the Communist regime in Poland, a number of political refugees relocated to the U.S. They were extremely active in mobilizing existing Polish American networks, which were still centered around Chicago, in support of the movement for democracy in Poland. As with the post-World War II refugees, these newcomers had a somewhat uneasy relationship with long-settled, assimilated Polish Americans—a relationship that Erdmans characterizes as "immigrants" vs. "ethnics." Like the refugees of earlier decades, the new arrivals were usually more highly educated and had a very different experience of Poland from that of the Polish Americans' parents, but particularly in the case of the 1980s refugees, there has still been some sense of obligation among Polish Americans to support people who were fleeing from the latest round of political repression or economic hardship in the ancestral homeland. See Mary Patrice Erdmans, "Recent Political Action on Behalf of Poland: The Interrelationships among Polonia's Cohorts, 1978-1990," in *Polish Americans*, Helen Z. Lopata (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994).

One such encounter between refugees and Polonia took place in Salem when the Piowtrowski family, relatives of an assistant pastor at St. John the Baptist Polish Church, arrived in the early 1980s. The Piowtrowskis were from Lodz, a center of anti-regime protests in 1981, and fled to Austria after martial law was declared. Wanda Walczak learned about the family from her daughter, who worked for an immigrant assistance agency in nearby Lowell, and mobilized the resources of the agency, the church, a committee to aid Polish refugees, and the Women's Polish-American Citizens Club of Salem, to facilitate their passage to America. Walczak acted as interpreter and friend for Henryk and Michalina Piowtrowski, her sister Maria, and the Piowtrowskis' two young children as they adjusted to their new home. Information about the Piowtrowski family is from an undated c. 1982 excerpt from an article in the Salem News, "Polish family ready for new life in America," by Kelly Murphy. In John Frayler files, Salem Maritime NHS.

as the last active Polish organization in Salem's Derby Street neighborhood. The goals that had prompted the founding of the men's and women's Citizens' Clubs—making citizens, registering voters, electing representatives from the community, and claiming a place within American democratic government—had been accomplished through the hard work and organization of the clubs and by the movement of a younger generation of American-born Poles into leadership positions in the community. The PLAV membership represented that younger cohort, and their adoption of the Daniels Street clubhouse shows the transition that was taking place in the middle years of the twentieth century as the second generation remade the places and institutions of Salem's Polish neighborhood as their own.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **GROWING UP POLISH AMERICAN: THE THIRD GENERATION OF POLES IN SALEM**

This chapter will focus on the memories and experiences of the third generation growing up in and around the Derby Street neighborhood in the period roughly from the 1940s to the 1960s. Where Salem's second-generation Poles were poised between their parents' homeland and their own, their third-generation sons and daughters were more unambiguously rooted in America. They looked at Poland and immigration from a distance, mainly through their relationships with then-elderly grandparents. The shared experience of Polish parochial education worked to create a sense of ethnic cohesiveness and helped to define the boundaries of Polish Salem. At the same time, those boundaries were always porous and in the process of being redefined. Salem's younger Poles looked outward in many ways, including through their activities at the House of Seven Gables, a site that had long served as a space of encounter and negotiation among Poles, Yankees, and others in the city. As they had from their earliest days, St. Joseph Hall and the other club venues mirrored the changes and concerns of the community, gradually shifting into a more purely social role and dwindling in membership as the third generation came of age and moved away from the old core of Polish Salem.

#### **Bridging the Generations: Grandparents and Grandchildren**

Two group photographs from shortly after World War II convey a sense of the generational transitions that were taking place in this period. In the first image (Figure 52), taken in 1946, the extended Sobocinski family gathers for a picnic, bringing together not only several generations but also several family members of the immigrant generation, including Wladyslaw, the eldest, his wife, and his sister and brothers who had come to the U.S. more than fifty years before. In the photo, these Sobocinski elders sit together in front of a long row of grandchildren and great-grandchildren, giving a sense of how this large family, like many others in Polish Salem, had increased in just two generations. Sobocinski relatives were (and continue) to be found throughout the community. Dorothy Filip, one of Wladyslaw's grandchildren, recalls her own daughter's introduction to this extended network of familial, social, and organizational ties: "I remember when my children went to CCD [Confraternity of Christian Doctrine] class at St. John's Church and they said, 'Oh, I met Barbara.' 'Well, that's your cousin.' 'Oh, I met—' 'That's your cousin,' you know!"

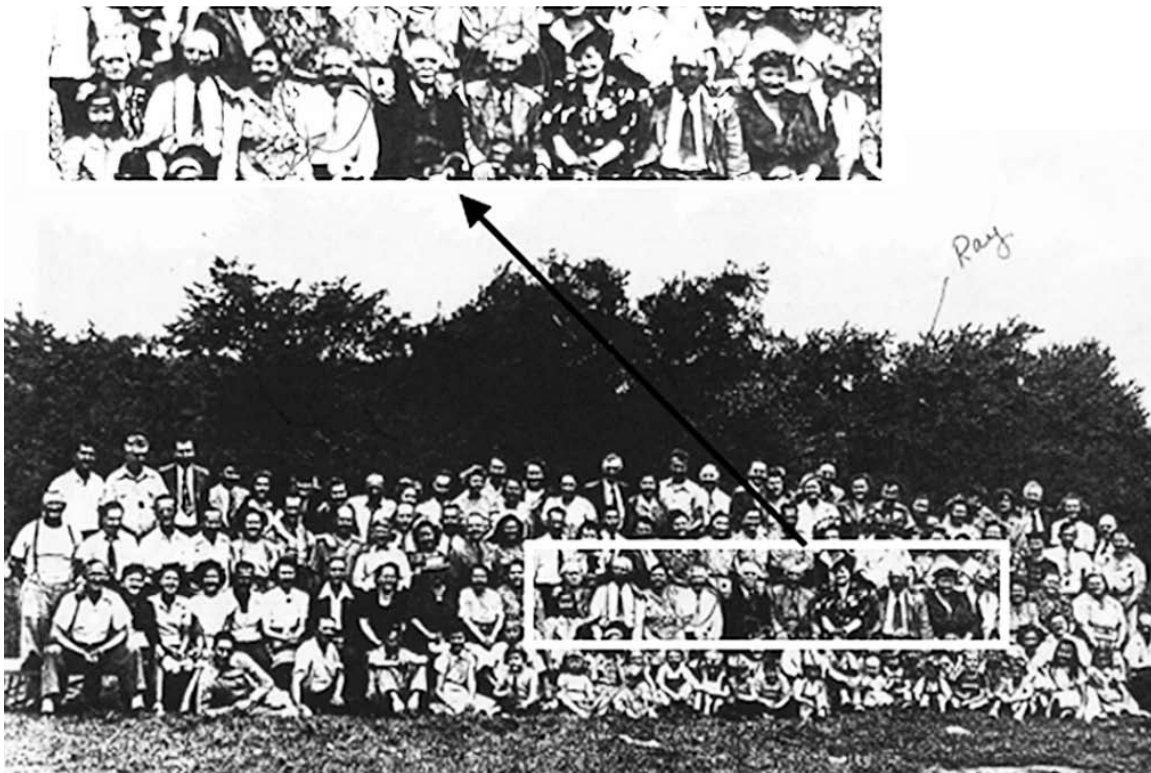


Figure 52 In this 1946 Sobocinski family reunion photo, members of the immigrant generation include the eldest brother, Wladyslaw (with white moustache, fifth from left in detail) and Felix, the first to come to the U.S. (sixth from left). (Raymond Sobocinski)



Figure 53 Wladyslaw and Franciszka Sobocinski, probably at the time of their fiftieth wedding anniversary c. 1936. (Joan Pizzello)

Wladyslaw and Franciszka Sobocinski had by then been married for about 60 years. Three years later, in 1949, another festive occasion took place in the community: the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the St. Joseph Society.<sup>1</sup> By that time, only four of the Society's charter members were still alive: Herman Tyburc (then 84 years old), John Jandraszek (79), Wladyslaw Sobocinski (89) and his brother Walenty (72).<sup>2</sup> Friends, relatives, and former Salem residents, along with dignitaries from the national and regional levels of the PRCUA and representatives from many other Polish organizations, attended the full weekend of activities to celebrate the anniversary, which represented perhaps a high point of the Society's existence in Salem. A "grand ball" with the local Krakowiacki Orchestra was held at the Hall on Saturday evening, followed by a banquet on Sunday afternoon at the Now and Then Hall on Essex Street. On Sunday morning, the Society held a procession from St. Joseph Hall to St. John the Baptist Church, followed by a Jubilee Mass at the Church and then another procession back to refreshments back at the Hall. The official photo of the occasion (Figure 54) shows members of the Society standing proudly outside the decorated Hall. In his address at the banquet, Society President Bernard (Bennie) Kaminski paid tribute to the four living founders and invoked the memory of all former Society members, living and dead.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 54 Members of the St. Joseph Society gather outside St. Joseph Hall in 1949 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Society's establishment. (Dorothy Filip)

<sup>1</sup>The anniversary was observed fifty years from the permanent establishment of the Society in 1899, rather than from the date of the first attempt at founding the group in 1897.

<sup>2</sup>"Four Charter Members of Society Alive," *Salem Evening News*, April 7, 1949.

<sup>3</sup>"Alter Society Parade Route to Pass Member's House," *Salem Evening News*, May 31, 1949.



However, Wladyslaw Sobocinski was not among the group celebrating on that Memorial Day weekend. He was on his deathbed, on the third floor of the original Sobocinski home at the foot of Daniels Street, where he was then living with the family of his youngest son, Alexander. The parading Society decided to pay tribute to this member of the founding generation of Salem Poles by altering their return route from the church to the Hall. They marched down Daniels Street from Derby so that they would pass directly under the dying man's window. Joan Pizzello, one of Alexander's daughters, remembers "standing right next to his chair in the window and people coming around the corner and waving, and him waving, and we were thrilled!" Wladyslaw died the next day at the age of 89.



Figure 55 The Sobocinski house at the foot of Daniels Street, 2009.

Typically, third-generation interviewees recalled grandmothers more fully than grandfathers, because the women often lived longer and frequently shared child-raising duties in their later years. Richard Swiniuch recalled the shock of his grandfather's death at 64 in 1951: "He went to water one of his sons' graves that he did every Sunday, and my two younger sisters unfortunately were there. And he just died, cerebral hemorrhage and died right there." Herman Tyburc, one of the charter members of the St. Joseph Society and former owner of the Hawkes House and many other properties, lived to a considerably greater age. Herman's grandson Frank, who grew up on Daniels Street, recalls his grandfather coming back from his new home with his married daughter in Danvers to visit the old neighborhood: "He would come down to Derby Street to say hi

and maybe stop at the club and he would go to Lubas who was a barber just down the street over here to get a haircut and I would happen to see him and I would go in and talk to him and he'd give me fifty cents and I would go home!"<sup>4</sup>

Many rural people in the immigrant generation seem to have retained their attachment to the countryside. Phyllis Luzinski recalls her father, the "more Russian than Polish" Alexander Konovalchik, holding onto his hope of owning his own farmland, over his wife's opposition:

My mother always said she had wanted to buy a house in Peabody, in the city, and my father wanted a farm, so they bought the farm and then they lost it [during the Depression]. She always kind of brought it up when she had had a little bit to drink, that she was right and they should have stayed in the city and they would have had a house!

Edward Carberg's grandmother also pursued this dream, apparently seeing her purchase of "an old Yankee farm" as a way to counter some of the health problems caused by the kind of hard physical labor that many Polish men did in the U.S.:

My late grandmother, my *babcia*, wanted to help her husband out, because he had a lung condition. He had worked on a coal barge shoveling coal and that made him a black skin when he came home, he had to wash all that dirt off. And that affected him. And she thought buying a farm and moving out to West Newbury would do him good. . . It was amazing, because she had really no formal education, and she was able to buy a farm out there and. . . they had a car, a few cars, and my late uncle Johnny drove the car for them at times. And my late mother drove for quite a while. . . That was something, because they were in a tight financial squeeze back in the 30s there, and yet they were able to do things. They came to Salem occasionally. And relatives would come out there to get vegetables from them, and fruit, out on the farm in West Newbury.

Grandparents often retained other practices and traditions. As already seen in Chapter Four, many older Poles in Salem used folk remedies for illnesses. Joan Davidowicz recalls her grandmother administering leeches to her grandfather's shoulder when it hurt him after the hard work of throwing skins in the leather factory:

He would take his shirt off and she would put the leeches all over them and they would suck the bad blood. And I remember as a kid. . . they would just fill up and fall off, and then she'd just pick them up and put them back in the jar. You'd get a couple that just didn't want to leave, so she'd go over there with the salt shaker and put the salt shaker on and that would be it.

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<sup>4</sup>Joseph Lubas, a barber, is listed at 142 Derby Street in the 1939 Salem street directory. The name may originally have been spelled "Lubasz."

Dorothy Stupakiewicz's grandmother, Antonina (Lech) Gesek, had been trained in traditional healing methods, including chiropractic, in Poland; Dorothy related a story told by her cousin about Antonina ministering to a boy in Poland who had fallen off a wall and been told by the doctor that he would never be able to walk again.

So my grandmother went over and she said, "Are you finished? Can I have my turn now?" So [the doctor] says, "Well, you can do whatever you want, because it's a hopeless case." So my grandmother said, "Okay." So she took the hat pin, she poked his toes, poked his leg with the needle, and there was a movement, there was movement in his toes and in his foot. So then my grandmother said, "Okay, I want you to roll over on your stomach so I can see your back." So she examined the spinal cord and then she said, "Okay, now I want you to move one of your hands over here." And she said, "And you just lay still, I'll take care of it." She put her hands somewhere on her back, pushed with all the might she could, the kid screamed, but he got up and he walked home. And the next day my cousin said he was out running and playing with all the kids.

So he [the cousin] says, "Wow, I want you to teach me how to do that." And she says, "No, I can't do that. I have to teach a female. A female is the only one I can teach." And my cousin... said, "Well, why don't you teach my mother? You have daughters—you have three daughters, why don't you teach one of them?" Well, one went into the convent. But my grandmother's remark was, "They're not strong enough."

Children of the third generation did learn various lessons from their elderly grandparents. Peter LaChappelle referred to his Krakow-born grandmother, who lived until 1968, as "the rock in the family." She had supported her own children after her husband was incapacitated and then helped Peter's mother raise Peter and his older brother. She insisted that the new generation be proud of their Polish background. In her interpretation, Poland's violent and often unhappy history was a result of its location at the crossroads of Eastern Europe, but "the culture and the society was as strong and as powerful as anything that Germany or Russia or Austria or Hungary could throw at them." Perhaps above all, these older Poles seem to have contributed to a sense among many people in the third generation of being deeply valued and part of a close community and neighborhood. Dorothy Filip, one of Wladyslaw and Franciszka Sobocinski's grandchildren, recalled this close-knit quality in her family and the larger community:

We didn't have a lot monetarily. We had a lot of love in our family, and the whole extended family. And not I think until we were in high school did we realize we lived at the time in a depressed area of Salem! You know, because we knew these

people who lived on Lafayette Street and that, you know, other friends that went to school, and it's really kind of funny because a lot of them wanted to come to our house after school because my mother was an at-home mother—She always baked. . . So we didn't have a lot, but she lost her parents young in life, and we were always, we'd take care of each other. And we still do. . . And the neighborhood, when you came home at night, like when we were older and you were dating, you know, you'd have to watch out because there was always someone who lived across the street or a Polish woman who would sit by the bench by the water, and they'd know exactly who you went out with and when you came home! And people knew each other that way, you know. They kind of watched out for you, too.

Or as Jane Davidowicz put it, “It was like Old Home Week. Everybody knew everybody.” Jane's daughter Joan grew up with her parents in Peabody but often stayed with her grandparents in the old neighborhood during the week because it was easier for her to get to the Polish school that way. Joan's recollections of her time at her grandparents' home show how the gendered worlds of the home and the social clubs intersected with one another, and how children growing up in the area were recognized as members of the community from an early age:

My grandfather would get out of work at A.C. Lawrence [leather company in Peabody] at around 3:30. . . and of course he would head into one of the bars because that was his daily routine. Now if somebody was in there celebrating the birth of a baby or whatever and they were buying, he was at that bar. So [my grandmother would] look at the clock, it'd be about quarter to five, she'd tell me to go find him, because supper was at five o'clock. And everything was centered around that big black cast-iron stove. And so I'd go into one bar after—and it would have the screen door, the fly-paper, the sawdust on the floor. . . And the bartender would say, “He's not here, try Subzi's or St. Joseph, you know, see if he's down there.” And this is what you'd do, you'd do the rounds of the bars, the kids were in and out. . . Everybody knew everybody.

## **Language and Learning: St. John the Baptist School**

One key institution that helped to define and redefine what it meant to be Polish in Salem was the parochial school on Herbert Street. For Polish immigrants and their children, as for many immigrant groups, education was a crucial source of advancement and achievement, and a way to attain the self-betterment that was an important motivation for coming to the U.S. At the same time, the achievement of greater education sometimes created tensions between people of different social classes, generations, and

political positions. Within Polish communities, the pursuit of educational advancement, then, tended to run counter to the widely-held ideal of egalitarianism.<sup>5</sup> The Polish Catholic Church quickly claimed a leadership role in educating young Poles in America, with parochial schools being established by the late 1860s and about a dozen groups of Polish teaching nuns working in the U.S. by the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> Notable among these were the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth and the Sisters of St. Felix, or Felician Sisters, who operated the Polish school in Salem.

Children whose forebears had come from the German partition or from urban places were more likely to have a history of schooling in their families. Within the largest wave of Polish migration to the U.S., from the Austrian and Russian partitions between the 1890s and 1914, the majority of immigrants were rural people with little or no formal education. One of these immigrants to Salem, Phyllis Luzinski's father Alexander Konovalchik, left an unusual and quite detailed written account of his early school experiences in his "Self-history," which sheds light on the previous experiences of education that most of these people brought with them to the U.S. In this short memoir, which we have already encountered in Chapter Two, Konovalchik noted that that only three of the eight children in his family had any schooling at all:

Our school was in village Rakovichi it has four grade. It was for boys only and it was supported by the government. There was another school for the girls that one was supported by the church. . . The Rakovichi was two miles away from our village, and naturally very few children started to go to school before ten years old. . .

Our school was old wooden building, with straw roof, consist of about 100' x 50' class room, [ja]nitor's family room, one big communal kitchen with long table and benches on each side. The[re] were teacher's room, and one big room for the boys that stays in all week on account, that their villages were to[o] far to go home every night. We had one teacher, and at beginning of the school season in the fall, we have about 110 to 115 boys, but by the time school finish in April, only about half of the boys [were] left. The schooling was not compulsory, so that they can quit it any time.

So, you see what one teacher can do with four grades and 110 boys. Nadia go with me only two winter, then she quit. My younger brother Costy took her place. I went four winters and graduated in 1910. Costy also graduated in 1912.

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<sup>5</sup> Lukowski and Zawadski, *Concise History*, 324.

<sup>6</sup> Bukowczyk records 782 Polish parishes in the U.S. over time, 511 of which included parochial schools; by the 1920s, about two-thirds of all Polish American children had at least some parochial schooling. See Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 72.

Despite the limitations of most families' educational backgrounds and the frequent importance of young working people for families' economic survival, many immigrants did value education highly for their own children. However, Mary Nowak recalled that in the first generation, parents were less likely to see educating girls as a priority: "At that time, they were saying, 'Women are going to be in the home. . . [W]hen they get married they're going to have kids, and they're going to have to do the diapers and stay home and cook.' The men need the schooling. Send my son to school!" As time went on, education for both sexes came to be a more widely-accepted value: "Little by little there were some people that were smart enough to say, 'Girls can go to school, too. They should go to school.'" As the next section of this chapter will show, girls in early Polish Salem also found many educational opportunities at the House of Seven Gables. Settlement houses like the Gables often made girls' activities a priority because they recognized that programs at the majority of benevolent organizations, like the city-operated Salem Fraternity and the YMCA, tended to be more focused on the social needs and problems of boys.<sup>7</sup>

The creation of parochial schools allowed for the pursuit of educational achievement while keeping children within the frameworks of Polish Catholicism and ethnicity. As we have seen in Chapter Three, the new parish of St. John the Baptist in Salem, founded in 1903, very quickly established its own school, which opened in 1908 in the basement of the church. The first teaching sisters were from the Felician convent in Buffalo, New York; in its first year of operation, the school enrolled 236 pupils.<sup>8</sup> The need for more space for the school was likely one of the main factors prompting the purchase of the "new" church building on St. Peter Street in 1906. Once the St. Peter Street church building was renovated in 1909, the original church building on Herbert Street was given over entirely to the school, which eventually expanded into the old Lynde School and a second former church building across the street (see Appendix I). The church's first priest, Father Czubek, continued to live across the street from the school in the rectory at

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<sup>7</sup> Mina Carson, *Settlement Folk: Social Thought and the American Settlement Movement, 1885-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 174-75.

<sup>8</sup> The first teachers were Sr. Mary Honorata Zientak, Sr. Mary Angeline Duszynska, Sr. Marcina Stelarz, and Sr. Helen Rydza, a postulant. Information about the first teachers and enrollment comes from a letter to Alice Zujewski from the central archives of the Felician order.



Figure 56 A group of Polish children celebrates their first communion in 1948; Monsignor Sikora is seated at center right. (Linda Moustakis)

31 Union Street until 1910; that house became a convent when the Felician Sisters moved into it in 1911.<sup>9</sup>

After the entire four-building campus was established, the school grades were divided between the two sides of the street. The Lynde School building (pictured in Figure 57) housed the kindergarten and first grade classrooms on the ground floor, with the seventh and eighth grades upstairs (see Figure 60). A tunnel connected this building to the former church just to the north, which was used as a school auditorium (see Figure 58). Across the street, the original Polish church had been converted for use as classrooms for the third through sixth grades, with a long hallway and classes on either side—third and fourth on the lower floor, fifth and sixth upstairs, with a cafeteria room and bathrooms in the basement. Eighth-graders were given the task of going across the street from the Lynde School to the old church building to ring the bell for lunch each day. According to Dorothy Filip, school uniforms were instituted sometime in the 1950s.

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<sup>9</sup>Carberg, “Rediscovering Salem Polonia.”



Figure 57 This 1940s photo shows St. John the Baptist School students in front of the former Lynde School building on Herbert Street, with the parish priest, Monsignor Sikora, at the top right. (Linda Moustakis)

Many former students remember the old buildings as being somewhat forbidding, particularly the imposing staircase leading up to the second floor of the old Lynde School. Some noted that the nuns' home seemed especially mysterious because it was generally off-limits to students. Joan Pizzello recalled being taken into the house to pay respects to a nun who had died and was laid out in her coffin upstairs: "I'll never forget it, because you were never allowed into that nuns' home other than in the vestibule. And we had to go upstairs and she was up there. I always remember that."

As with any educational system, the parochial approach seemed to suit some students and not others. Many interviewees spoke of the strict discipline of the nuns' classrooms. Buddy Walker (Edward Wolkiewicz), who was graduated from the school in 1938, remembers the nuns as, "Strict. And the ruler ruled, well, the pointer, actually. You'd get out in the back closet room there and put your hand out, and wham, bam." Ron Potorski, who graduated in 1953, echoed this recollection, but added the common sentiment that the teaching had been good overall. In Peter LaChapelle's assessment, "It



was a parochial education, and as the word says, it was parochial in all manners, and they didn't miss a trick. . . . And the education was just phenomenal. You had to follow the plan, but if you followed the plan, you really moved through those grades and you really knew the subject matter." Some others saw the parochial system as less challenging than the public schools—for example, Stanley Rybicki remembered never having been assigned to read a whole book and do a book report on it until he reached Salem High School, and some saw the teaching style as too heavily based on "rote" learning.

The teaching nuns at St. John the Baptist School were American-born Polish women who were trained and based in the Enfield, Connecticut house of the Felician Sisters.<sup>10</sup> Interviewees for this study shared memories of some of the individual teachers, including Sister Florentine, a devoted Red Sox fan who was known for tatting incessantly through classes. Joan Pizzello remembered Sister Florentine's theatrical productions:

She did some wonderful things for plays, Sister Florentine did. One year when I was there, she swore everybody to secrecy and they had this fabulous play and they were dressed in the Polish traditional costumes and the vests and the dresses and things, and at the very end of the show, there were boys, and they pulled their wigs off, and their parents almost passed out because they had no idea their boys would do this or—They would do it for her. And there was all this big adventure, you know. It was fun.

Sister Ruthena, a large woman, had a reputation—exaggerated to the point of legend—for being willing to hang students out the windows by their feet if they misbehaved. According to Joan Pizzello, "the boys were all afraid of Sister Ruthena because she was not afraid of them." Others also spoke of finding the nuns daunting. Ed Carberg recalled the shock of having his teacher take a fatal fall in his classroom when he was in first grade. Eddie Luzinski wondered what the nuns' faces would have looked like without the concealing habits, "because they had pretty faces." The teaching sisters rotated in and out of the school, although many stayed for years, and according to Phyllis Luzinski, students generally knew which teacher they were likely to have the following year.

In addition to academic and religious education, the Felician sisters also provided a midday meal to their students, an important function for those from households where food was sometimes scarce. Joan Davidowicz recalled:

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<sup>10</sup>There was, and continues to be, another Felician "Province" in Lodi, New Jersey. Joan Pizzello and Dorothy Filip recalled that the teachers in Salem were from the Enfield Province. General information about the Felician Sisters is from their website, <http://www.felicianslodi.org/ourroots/history.html>.



Figure 58 In this mid-1940s photo, taken on the steps of the Herbert Street building used as the school's auditorium, two of the first-grade students, Barbara Pszeny and Marijane Plecinoga, are dressed up like Felician nuns; Sister Francis is the teacher. (Linda Moustakis)

The nuns used to get rations from the government and they would get powdered things and dried things and what have you, and they would concoct things. And what they did, is the convent was next to the school, and the nun who was the cook, every day we would have a big pot of soup, and the milk would come in bottles, and so the milk would be delivered in the morning. There were no refrigerators, it just stayed in the corner in the wooden things with the caps on top of the bottles.<sup>11</sup>

And then around 11:30 somebody from either the seventh or the eighth grade would go over to the convent, two kids, and they would haul this huge stock-pot over of boiling hot soup, over to what was the cafeteria. And not all the kids could fit in it, so it's like one class at a time would come. And they had these white porcelain bowls and you'd get a ladle of soup. Well, one year, the government gave them dried fruit, and the nun made fruit soup that would gag a maggot. And we had to eat it. Oh, to this day I can remember it! It was purple and you had all this stuff floating around in it and it was the most God-awful stuff. And we had to eat it. There were so many kids that were sick—I mean, it was awful. It was absolutely

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<sup>11</sup> Joan Pizzello noted that her school experiences may have permanently ruined her taste for milk: "All I remember about them is they'd deliver the cases of ice-cold milk and they'd put them on the registers on the floor. It was warm! So by the time you had your milk, it was warm. I think it turned me off forever."

awful. But that was our lunch everyday, it was that stock-pot full of soup... They fed you in the schools. Because there were a lot of kids that didn't eat. And so this was part of the community, church, and school. They fed you. And whatever they had, you had. And it was really something, because every day that pot of soup came over. And it was just, it was great, because you knew you were going to have a bottle of milk and you were going to have soup that day, and for some kids, that was all they had.

In the school's early decades, its teaching schedule was divided between Polish and English, with Polish history, grammar, and religion covered in the mornings and American history and English grammar in the afternoons. Over time, and particularly after World War II, the Polish language was emphasized less and less, reflecting an overall shift in Polish immigrant communities toward speaking English on an everyday basis. This shift caused many debates within Polish American communities. On the one hand, there were people who wanted to maintain close ties between the immigrants and their homeland, to promote an exalted view of Polish culture, or to use the Polish language as a way to strengthen bonds among the immigrants in the U.S.<sup>12</sup> These people believed that the new generations of Polish children should be taught their ancestral language in schools and cultural institutions. This was the approach represented by organizations like Salem's Chopin Choral Society, with its formal concert dress and classical repertoire; the PRCUA similarly supported the teaching and speaking of "good" Polish.<sup>13</sup> As the daughter of a prominent *szlachta* family, Hedwiga (Romaszkiewicz) Kohn encountered this view of Polish culture early in life, for example in one incident she recollected from her twelfth year:

[My dad] was a great one for reading. He used to read every time he travelled anywhere, he had a book, sat on the train and he'd be reading. So he took this Polish book out. It was by Mickiewicz, the poet that wrote this book. And it was not a very long poem there and he says to me, "I want you to learn that because we're going to have a mass meeting in Boston and I want you to get up and say the speech." So my mother helped me to memorize it. Some of the words I couldn't pronounce, because I didn't have the opportunities that the children have today to go to a Polish school. We didn't have that in those days... And of course I was awfully nervous, but I did it...

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<sup>12</sup> For discussions of the close and contested relationship between language and nationalism, see E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 52-54 and Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 197-98.

<sup>13</sup> Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 237.

On the other hand, the version of “proper” or “pure” Polish promoted by these cultural conservationists was usually quite different from the regional dialects or vernacular Polish spoken in many families.<sup>14</sup> This fact may have made it easier to let go of the language over the first two generations of settlement in America.

Many immigrant and second-generation Poles actively emphasized the speaking of English for their children, because it was seen as a key way to prosper in America. Jane Davidowicz, now in her nineties, said, “[T]he younger kids, they’d turn around and say, ‘Speak American, because you’re in America.’ . . . My mother even said that she wanted to learn to speak American, so she says to me, ‘Speak English to me.’” Wladyslaw Sobocinski, in the memory of his granddaughters Joan Pizzello and Dorothy Filip, also advocated putting English first; his household was a bilingual one.<sup>15</sup> Cousins Eddie Luzinski and Fred Korzeniewski noted that neither of their families spoke much Polish at home; Fred recalled speaking a few words of Polish to his Polish-born father, but his father also gradually learned to speak English. Frank Tyburc’s wife remembered Polish as “a secret language” than grandparents used to speak in front of the children without being understood. For many second- and third-generation Salem Poles, much of the Polish language they learned was at St. John the Baptist School.<sup>16</sup>

Groups like the PRCUA tried to counter this shift toward speaking only English, but it was a losing battle. A 1954 editorial in the PRCUA’s newspaper, *Naród Polski*, lamented, “The Polish language in America is disappearing. It is disappearing from Polish homes, from schools, churches, and streets.”<sup>17</sup> For the majority of people, it seemed,

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<sup>14</sup> Cygan, “Inventing Polonia,” 222-23.

<sup>15</sup> Helen Zand reports that Polish communities were effectively bilingual by about 1940. See Obidinski and Zand, *Polish Folkways in America*, 44.

<sup>16</sup> One place of linguistic negotiation with mainstream American culture was the use of masculine name endings only, to conform to English usage. In traditional Polish usage, women’s names were erased in some ways—Joan Pizzello and Dorothy Filip recall that until they were young adults, they didn’t actually know their aunts’ first names, because they were simply called “*Ciocia Pawlowa*” (Aunt “Paul’s wife”) or “*Ciocia Janowa*” (Aunt “John’s wife”). But correct Polish usage did acknowledge the women’s existence *as women* by feminizing their surnames to indicate their gender—Rybicka instead of Rybicki, for instance. Within the community, even the non-Polish-speaking children generally used this form, but as Joan Pizzello noted, “When you graduated and went out in the world, we’d always just use the ‘ski’”—the masculine ending. Thus the complexities of language and the relationships it represented were expanded in some ways while being flattened in others as Salem’s Poles became more Americanized over time.

<sup>17</sup> Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 237.

seeing their children and grandchildren thrive in American society was a more important goal than holding onto a somewhat idealized version of the Polish language. The PRCUA, the parochial schools, and other Polish American institutions gradually made this shift along with their communities, accepting the fact that Poles in America were crafting their own hybrid vision of ethnic identity in which they could be Polish while speaking English.<sup>18</sup>

At the same time, a sense of belonging to the community clearly remained, even while individuals were able to make their own decisions about retaining or rejecting various aspects of Polish identity. A published anecdote about a successful Polish garage owner in 1950s Salem illustrates this combination of flexibility and cohesiveness:

This successful businessman Americanized his name, joined the country club, and took his children out of parochial school because the nuns insisted upon teaching them to pray in Polish. In spite of having violated so many of the mores of the ethnic group, he had not been totally rejected by it. . . This particular man contributed good sums of money to many Polish charities and was expected to give handsome support to the [new] Polish school project in spite of the fact that his children would not attend the school.<sup>19</sup>

This example suggests that as Salem's second-generation Poles pursued education and the upward mobility that it promised, some aspects of Polishness—for example, children's attendance at the parochial school or the maintenance of the Polish language—were negotiable. But there was still a clear expectation that in order to belong to the community, people had to contribute towards its shared projects.

By the 1940s and 1950s, then, when children in Salem's third Polish generation were attending St. John the Baptist School, there was much less emphasis on the teaching of Polish language and history in the classroom. Ron Potorski, who graduated from the school in 1953, had the common experience of knowing just enough of the language to understand what his grandmother was saying to him, although he would reply to her in English. At that point, he noted that "they didn't really push Polish on us" in school except for prayers and catechism—the connection with the Catholic Church was still of course of primary importance at the school. Joan Pizzello recalled using workbooks and

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<sup>18</sup>Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 238. Jonathan Zimmerman notes that this relationship to language resembled that of other immigrant groups in this period, in which "Americans adopted ethnic identities but shunned ethnic languages." See Jonathan Zimmerman, "Ethnics against Ethnicity: European Immigrants and Foreign-Language Instruction, 1890-1949," *Journal of American History* (March 2002), 1403.

<sup>19</sup>Hunter et al., *Community Organization*, 64.

memorizing vocabulary, but not really learning any conversational Polish: “It was funny, when my mother was older, I would make her laugh, because I would talk to her in Polish! And all I remembered was some of the crazy things from the workbook, you know, so I’d say silly things like, ‘*Evalina ma rybky*,’ which means ‘Evaline has fish!’” Dorothy Stupakiewicz similarly found that her Polish conversations with her aged grandmother, the traditional healer Antonina Gesek, were limited:

I talked half and half Polish, and she talked half and half Polish, you know. We used to call it “Ponahalf”—“Halfnapo,” “Ponahalf.” We used to tease each other, you know, because just to get her to learn more English, and for me to learn more Polish, I would try to talk to her in Polish and she would try to talk to me in English. I could understand everything she was saying in Polish, you know. It’s just my tongue used to get twisted.



Figure 59 The student body of St. John the Baptist School in the 1940s, with one column of the original Polish church building visible on the left. (Linda Moustakis)

Two interviewees with a somewhat different relationship to the Polish language were Alice Zujewski and Buddy Walker. Both sets of Alice’s grandparents were among the many Polish migrants who intended to come to the U.S. only temporarily; they stayed long enough for their children to be born as American citizens, then the whole family returned to Poland. Alice’s parents were thus American citizens who grew up in Poland, coming back to the U.S. as young adults to marry, work, and start a family of their own. Her parents were contemporaries of the second-generation Polish Americans who were

beginning to become more assimilated in the U.S., but they themselves were native Polish speakers and Alice grew up speaking fluent Polish at home.

Buddy Walker had a different experience. Like most of the grandchildren of immigrants, he seldom spoke Polish at home, but his involvement in the polka world gave him a reason to rediscover and use the language, as an excerpt from his interview shows:

*Interviewer:* Did you ever speak Polish at home?

*Buddy:* Very rarely. With the grandmother, I did. And the funny part about it, well, nobody tried to use it. They wanted to get Americanized. But I was fortunate, with the music, I started to have to sing Polish songs. So I put the language to good use. So my reading is good, but my writing is nothing to write home about. . . But then I get another problem with the whole thing is, at that time everybody was on a farming level, not the high educated, and half the stuff wasn't invented when they left Poland, you know. So everything got kind of, like streetcar would be *streetcare* you know. Radio, radio, you know. Not the correct words for it. *Airopolanem* instead of airplane, it's *samolot*, you know.

*Interviewer:* Yeah—so they were speaking very rural Polish and talking about rural life.

*Buddy:* Yeah, mostly, yeah.

*Interviewer:* So—okay, but you used it more than most people of your generation would, because of the singing.

*Buddy:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* So do you still speak it at all, or is it more—

*Buddy:* Well, I use it, like I go to the Polish church and we've got an influx of the newcomers from Poland, so you have to, to relate with them, you have to speak the language.

*Interviewer:* And I'm curious about that, because I've heard some people say, "Gee, I can't speak to them because I don't speak Polish anymore!" But you're able to communicate with them.

*Buddy:* I'm able to communicate pretty good, yeah. In fact, when I was running the garage a lot of them I had for customers. But even then, I had to learn a whole new vocabulary. How do you say "spark plugs" in Polish? [laughs]<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Linguistic borrowing is characteristic of much Polish American speech. Some of these borrowings reflect regional American accents; for example, Helen Zand reports that many Poles used the borrowed word "*pykcie*" for "picture," except in New England, where the regional accent came through in the word "*pykia*"! See Obidinski and Zand, *Polish Folkways in America*, 41.

*Interviewer:* So would you learn that from them?

*Buddy:* I had to learn that from them!

The parochial school system was not for every student. Even within the close-knit Derby Street neighborhood, some Polish children attended the Phillips or Bentley elementary schools on Essex Street rather than St. John the Baptist School.<sup>21</sup> Some parents seem always to have preferred a more diverse educational setting for their children, while some children did not thrive under the nuns' strict discipline. Ron Potorski's youngest brother was transferred to the Phillips School for his final two years of elementary school, because of "some problems with the nuns" that Ron does not recollect clearly. Even for those who did do well in the Polish school, broader horizons were sometimes appealing. Having many friends who attended the public Phillips School, Peter LaChapelle says that he knew at the end of the seventh grade that he didn't want to stay with Catholic school for high school and college. "I heard news of worlds beyond where they changed classes, they had art classes, they had gym, and you moved every hour!" Like many who were graduated from St. John the Baptist School, Peter chose to attend Salem High School for his secondary education. David's grandmother, Josephine, was initially shocked by his decision not to continue with Catholic education. At first, Peter recalls,

[She] thought I was going to go to hell. You were going to leave the Catholic education, you were going to have all these people—but she understood. She at first was shocked, but that only lasted a little bit. And then she understood that if it was good for Peter, it was good for Josephine also. And that was just indicative of their whole attitude to what was here. They embraced the traditions but they encouraged the changes, too. They weren't so provincial to shut off the border, in everything they did.

On the other hand, Peter's older brother David preferred to continue with the parochial model into his high school years. He switched to a Catholic high school after initially enrolling at Salem High School:

When you go to a small Catholic school, you're accepted right away. And when you're put into a public arena, there wasn't enough structure for me, you know. And there wasn't enough—I mean, the nuns were very, very—it was almost like a family, you know. They knew who you were and they knew what your problems were.

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<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Borkowski reports that in 1930, there were 510 students in Polish schools in Salem as well as many Polish students in other city schools. See Borkowski, "One Hundred Fifteen Years," 29.





Figure 60 St. John the Baptist School class, 1954: first row, front to back, Barbara Pszeny, Dorothy Kufchinska, Celia Carter, Mary Watis; second row, Marijane Plecinoga, Alice Sobicsielska, Alicia Mendalka, Clare Foley; third row, Celia Negri, Linda Baldwin, Diane Marquis, Lori Szezechowicz; far row, Ronald Oullette, unknown, Thomas Meller, Charles Kozlowski. (Linda Moustakis)

Aside from issues of educational style and diversity, the physical setting for St. John's classes posed its own challenges. In general, Polish parochial schools had far less modern facilities than their public counterparts, and Salem was no exception.<sup>22</sup> At a time when many of Salem's older buildings were in deteriorated condition, the old wooden school structures of the school campus seem to have become particularly dilapidated. Many former students spoke about how cold the buildings were in winter and about the dark atmosphere in the old Lynde School building. A local Polish doctor involved in the fundraising effort to support the building of a new school told a group of researchers, "Anyone would know that it is a shame to have a school that looks like a torn down wreck. Sometimes I feel that I could go and burn it down and it wouldn't be a sin."<sup>23</sup> He was echoing the critique of others in Polish American communities, some

<sup>22</sup> Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 73.

<sup>23</sup> Hunter et al. *Community Organization*, 58. Although unnamed in the sociological study of the school planning process, the doctor was likely Louis Kotarski, son of Alexander and Clara Kotarski who were important property-owners and community leaders in the first generation.

of whom went as far as to suggest that the poor condition of the Felician schools was actually undermining Polish pride in ethnic identity by linking Polish parochial education with poverty. Many Polish communities worked to make up for the poor condition of their schools by emphasizing secular cultural institutions, and it may also be that the deterioration of the facilities at St. John the Baptist School did a great deal to make the youth programs of the House of Seven Gables more appealing to those in the Derby Street neighborhood. However, even in its deteriorated condition, the school campus on Herbert Street represented an anchor point for two generations of Polish youth in Salem—a place where children and adults defined, tested, and were nurtured by their community and its shared histories and values.

## **The House of Seven Gables as a Polish Community Institution**

Another anchor point in the Polish neighborhood was the settlement house and colonial compound that Salem preservationist and reformer Caroline Emmerton created at the foot of Turner Street. Many participants in this study spoke to us about the importance of the House of Seven Gables in their social and educational lives, particularly for women and children. In the words of Jane Davidowicz, the Gables was “our second home,” while Hedwiga and Joseph Kohn’s son Chester recalled spending “most of my childhood days at the Gables” and Ron Potorski said, “That was really the biggest social thing going around here, was the House of Seven Gables.” This site is worth exploring in some detail, because it gives some insight into the ways that Poles in Salem encountered “mainstream” American culture and incorporated it into their own processes of becoming Polish American.

The U.S. settlement house movement began late in the nineteenth century, when young, middle-class reformers in America’s cities moved into poor urban neighborhoods as a new way to address the problems associated with urban poverty. These resident workers hoped to establish helping and healthy relationships with the neighbors, who were often immigrants. In many neighborhoods, the settlement house provided crucial services and resources—English and citizenship classes, well baby clinics, playgrounds, daycare and kindergarten programs, in addition to the plethora of cultural and recreational programs and social clubs they sponsored to provide recreation and social sustenance. In many ways, they sought to address the same needs that the mutual assistance organizations did, with the crucial difference that where organizations like the

St. Joseph Polish Roman Catholic Society operated *within* ethnic communities, settlement houses were explicitly created to reach across ethnic and class boundaries.<sup>24</sup>

Poles in Salem, and particularly in the Derby Street neighborhood, were quite clear about where the city's inter-ethnic boundaries were, but those boundaries were not absolute. Growing up in the 1930s, Ed Luzinski recalled that "Sometimes they said 'Don't go on the other side of Congress Street, you'll get beat up,' because it was a different neighborhood." Because the Polish and French neighborhoods abutted one another at the western end of Derby Street, differences between those two groups were particularly noticeable, although intermarriages also occurred and became quite common by the mid-twentieth century. Jane and Joan Davidowicz saw the Polish community as being particularly vigilant about its social boundaries:

*Joan:* It's kind of like if you're not in, you are out. There's no middle ground. Because I remember as a child listening to, you know, I never knew what prejudice was, because when you were a kid, when you were enveloped by your community, I mean, you get a lot of love. But the Pequot Mills was the big thing, which later became Naumkeag Mills which is now Shetland Park. And there was a war between the French and the Polish.

*Jane:* Always!

*Joan:* They were the ones that worked there, and they were very disparaging to each other. And I can remember, I had, my father's sister, when her son started dating a French girl, she broke it up. She broke it up. I mean, you know, he was older, and there was no way that it was allowed. It was okay that he married an Italian girl, because the families knew each other. But the French—

*Jane:* God forbid you date different nationalities.

By the time Richard Swiniuch was growing up in the 1940s and 1950s, though, he saw little real tension among the different ethnic groups: "There was no real strife amongst

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<sup>24</sup> The settlement house movement was inspired by the example of Toynbee Hall in East London, established in 1884. The most famous of the American settlement houses was undoubtedly Chicago's Hull House, founded in 1889 by Jane Addams. In Massachusetts there were almost 60 settlement houses by 1911, many of these in Boston. Here, Robert A. Woods established Andover House, later South End House, in 1891, modeled loosely after what he saw at Toynbee Hall in England. Woods himself was a major voice in the regional and national settlement movement. He published a study of his work at the South End House, *The City Wilderness: A Settlement Study* in 1898, and a directory of American settlement houses, *Handbook of Settlements*, with Albert J. Kennedy in 1911. On the settlement house movement in the United States see Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1910); Carson, *Settlement Folk*; Allen Davis, *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914* (New York: Oxford, 1967).

any of us, you know. In fact, half of us married French or Irish, and the French married the Poles and you know, vice versa.” The fact that so many Polish students attended the public Salem High School contributed greatly to breaking down inter-ethnic boundaries in the city, as did the greater mobility and mass culture that people were experiencing after World War II.

In many ways, there were deeper and more important differences between the city’s “ethnic” immigrant groups and Salemites of English or Yankee stock, between Protestants and Catholics, and between the city’s well-to-do, mostly Yankee classes and the largely working-class newcomers. It was these kinds of differences that Poles encountered at the House of Seven Gables, in the heart of what was otherwise a largely Polish neighborhood. While settlement houses celebrated ethnic and immigrant culture in many ways, these projects were also designed to Americanize their new neighbors. The settlement house movement, like other reform projects of this era, was in large part a response to tremendous social changes that caused many Americans to look to the past as a sure and steady vessel of America’s center even as thousands of foreign newcomers promised to reshape the social and cultural fabric of the nation. For many it was hard to see the values and ideals of the Republic in the new faces and customs of Eastern European immigrants. The settlement house, then, was intended to serve the immigrants but also to guide them in a particular direction.

Beginning in 1908 with craft classes and other activities in space borrowed from the YMCA in the old Seaman’s Bethel next to the waterfront, Caroline Emmerton quickly expanded both the range of programs and the physical scope of the organization. She, like others in the movement, made a direct connection between preserving the American past and encouraging recent immigrants to absorb what the settlement house workers saw as core American values. That same year, Emmerton purchased the Turner-Ingersoll House (the House of Seven Gables), realizing its financial and educational value.<sup>25</sup> This purchase gave her a way to link the settlement house mission to the promotion of American history (especially the colonial period, with its supposedly stable social relationships, ethnic and cultural homogeneity, and preindustrial notions of workmanship and aesthetics) and

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<sup>25</sup> By the late nineteenth century, this house had come to represent Nathaniel Hawthorne and his work as the presumptive setting for his 1851 novel, *The House of the Seven Gables*. When Emmerton purchased the house in 1908 it was already a tourist attraction. Anne Grady, “National Historic Landmark Nomination, House of the Seven Gables Historic District” (National Park Service, 2005), 23.

the idea that Yankees, too, had once been newcomers in Salem: as she wrote, “If, as is generally conceded, the settlements do the best Americanization work, should not this settlement excel whose home is the ancient House of Seven Gables, the foundations of which were laid by the first immigrants who came here long ago, strangers in a strange land.”<sup>26</sup> Over time, Emmerton continued to expand and reorganize the compound, eventually moving a number of colonial-era buildings to the site.<sup>27</sup> In Emmerton’s vision, the historical side of the site would attract tourists and generate income to support the settlement work, as well as underscoring the lessons of citizenship to be learned from the American past.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Caroline Emmerton, manuscript on the purpose of the settlement, House of the Seven Gables Archive, quoted in Grady, “National Historic Landmark Nomination,” 28 and Edward M. Stevenson, *The History of the House of Seven Gables and Summary of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Novel* (Southborough, MA: Yankee Colour Corp., 1979), 7. Such sentiments were echoed later in the century by the curator of the new American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1925, who saw the galleries of early American material culture as part of a means to Americanize immigrants. “The tremendous changes in the character of our nation, and the influx of foreign ideas utterly at variance with those held by the men who gave us the Republic threaten, and unless checked, may shake its foundations. . .” he remarked, while suggesting that the early American furniture and architectural remnants exhibited here might offer “the traditions so dear to us and so invaluable in the Americanization of many of our people, to whom much of our history is little known.” See R.T.H. Halsey, and Elizabeth Tower, *The Homes of Our Ancestors as Shown in the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1925), xxii, quoted in William B. Rhoads, “The Colonial Revival and the Americanization of Immigrants” in *The Colonial Revival in America*, Alan Axelrod, ed. (New York: W.W. Norton Co., 1985), 349.

<sup>27</sup> Emmerton engaged the colonial revival architect Joseph Everett Chandler to restore the exterior of the Turner-Ingersoll to its ca. 1720 appearance and the interior—loosely—to the 1840s, the time depicted in Hawthorne’s novel. Restoration work began in the spring of 1909, and the house opened to the public in April 1910. During the early years of the settlement, the house served as a residence for the resident workers. Other buildings that were added later—the Hooper Hathaway House, Retire Becket House, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s birthplace, and the Phippen House—served various purposes, including an antique shop, lodging for guests, gift shop, and tea room. The Association bought the buildings on the north half of the site (except 42 Turner St.) in the 1960s, demolished them, and turned that area into a parking lot. In 1972 the site and buildings were added to the National Register of Historic Places. The Gables built the Seamans Visitor Center in 1994. On the chronology of the development of the House of Seven Gables compound, see Emmerton, *Chronicles*; Grady, “National Historic Landmark Nomination”; Stevenson, *History of the House of Seven Gables*.

<sup>28</sup> Wanda Walczak, who was eight years old when the hybrid institution was launched in 1910, recalled in 1978, “We didn’t know what the House of Seven Gables was, naturally. We didn’t know about the Scarlet Letter and all that. But we did know about Caroline Emmerton. . . She’d come down to Derby Street in a carriage—she was a very stately woman. . . You had nothing but respect and admiration for her.”



Figure 61 Seaman's Bethel, built in 1888, known once as Bethel House, and later re-christened Turner Hall, pictured before 1914. (House of the Seven Gables)

Settlement houses like the House of Seven Gables were more than simple Americanizing projects, however. For one thing, the residents who ran the Gables saw themselves more as neighbors than as missionaries. For them, the settlement was “a neighborhood centre and we are here to be of service to our neighbors in any good cause in which they may enlist our interest. We are not here to work for them but with them.”<sup>29</sup> They wished to make the Gables a place that gave advice and information, a place to help people get work and services rather than a place to give services. They helped connect people with agencies and places that could give relief, hoping to serve as neighbors rather than relief workers themselves.<sup>30</sup> A key site for these neighborly encounters was the old Seaman's Bethel, which Emmerton purchased in 1914, renamed Turner Hall, and moved

<sup>29</sup> House of the Seven Gables Settlement Association (HSGSA), First Annual Report, 1910-1911, 13-14.

<sup>30</sup> HSGSA, Second Annual Report, 1911-1912, 5.

north of the main Gables building (see Figures 61 and 62). In the words of Beth McIntire, who served as the Gables' director from 1934 to 1965, Turner Hall "*was the Gables, as far as the settlement house goes.*"<sup>31</sup> Chet Kohn, who later served on the Gables board of directors, remembered that "It was a meeting place. We'd make it a point. Instead of meeting on the corner, the byword would be 'in front of Turner Hall.'"<sup>32</sup> This was the location for drama, athletics, concerts, dances, and other group activities, while the basement housed club work and other facilities. At the Gables and most settlements, club and class work were gendered; typical boys' classes included cobbling, woodworking, gymnastics, basketry, cooking, and clay; sewing, embroidery, knitting, cooking, housekeeping, gymnastics, dancing, and painting were offered for girls. In 1910-1911 the Gables offered 41 classes for small fees; these included English classes, one specifically for Polish girls. In addition the Gables supported several clubs which they hoped would become self-sufficient and self-governing "little democracies."<sup>33</sup>



Figure 62 A view of the Turner-Ingersoll House (House of the Seven Gables) before 1914, with the Seamen's Bethel in its original position next to the water. (House of the Seven Gables)

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with Beth McIntire and Helen Chapin, Oct. 18, 1978. House of the Seven Gables.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Chester Kohn, August 4, 1978. House of the Seven Gables.

<sup>33</sup> HSGSA, Fifth Annual Report, 1914-15, 7, 9.

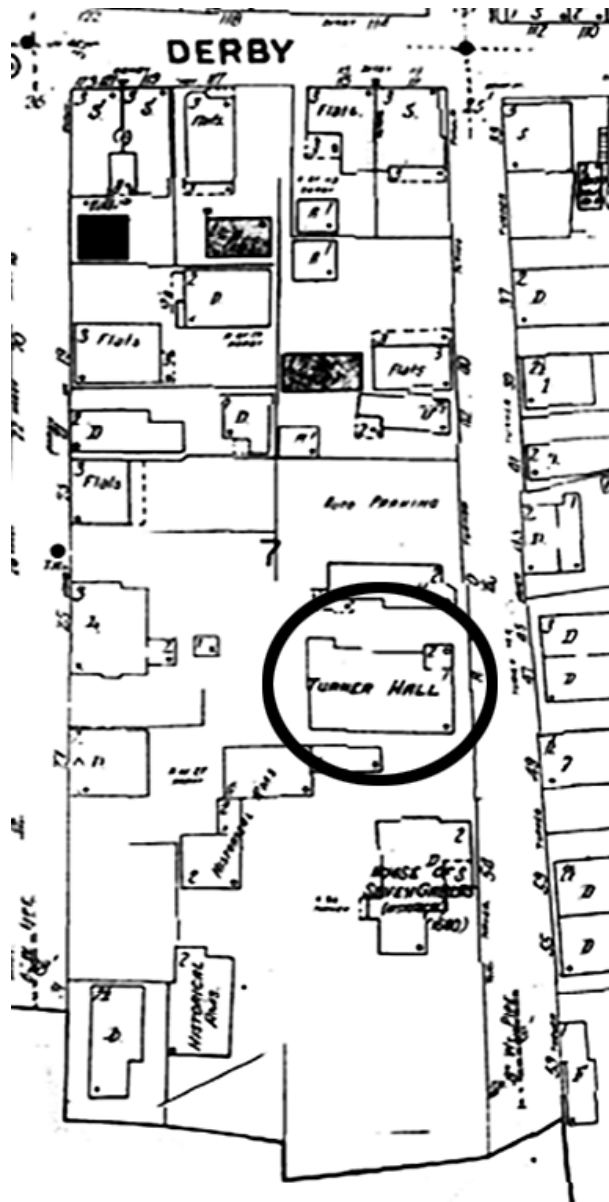


Figure 63 On this 1950 map, Turner Hall is shown in its later position north of the House of Seven Gables/Turner-Ingersoll House. (Essex County Registry of Deeds)

Another thing that made the Gables a space of encounter between Poles and Yankees rather than a top-down Americanizing project was that for much of the twentieth century, membership at the Gables was so heavily Polish that the site functioned in many ways as an adjunct to the existing network of Polish organizations and clubs, rather than being something entirely separate. In 1908, the neighborhood was still predominantly Irish-American, although the Polish presence was rising. By 1914-1915, most of the



Gables' constituents were Polish, Irish-American and Russian.<sup>34</sup> The following year, the Gables reported that the Russian Jews, Irish-American and Poles were "in excess" and the neighborhood mainly Polish and Catholic.<sup>35</sup> After World War I, with the Polish community becoming more established and consolidated around Derby Street, the Gables' Annual Report characterized the neighborhood as "more homogeneous racially," mainly Polish.<sup>36</sup> By 1922, 238 members out of 467 were Polish, and 72 Irish, and Polish membership at the Gables continued to outpace other ethnic groups in the 1920s,<sup>37</sup> with the great majority of members living within the Derby Street neighborhood.<sup>38</sup> The Polish community remained the Gables' largest constituency through 1965, and possibly later.

From early in the organization's existence, club and class activities at the Gables reflected and responded to the presence of the Polish families in the neighborhood, particularly the women and children. As early as 1910-1911 the settlement offered classes in English, one of them specifically for Polish girls.<sup>39</sup> Resident workers tried especially hard to encourage immigrant women to learn English, sometimes sending teachers into their homes if they were unable to bring women to the House for classes. The early annual reports indicate many social activities for Polish mothers and girls—dinners, picnics, parties, and field trips.<sup>40</sup> Early in the century, resident workers learned that their kindergarten program was a very effective way to reach not only children, but their mothers. The Polish Women's Club grew directly out of the contact with kindergarten mothers; club members met weekly and conducted their business in Polish, but resident workers joined them for socializing and used the opportunity to teach some English to

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<sup>34</sup> HSGSA, Fifth Annual Report, 1914-15, 4. Other nationalities represented at the Gables in 1914-15 included French, Italian, Austrian, Swedish, Syrian, and English.

<sup>35</sup> HSGSA, Sixth Annual Report, 1915-16, 5. By the first world war, the settlement workers noted the multi-ethnic and multi-religious quality of their members—they worked with people of fourteen nationalities and eight religions, mainly Roman Catholic.

<sup>36</sup> HSGSA, Eleventh Annual Report, 1920-21, 4.

<sup>37</sup> HSGSA, Twelfth Annual Report, 1921-22, 4.

<sup>38</sup> HSGSA, Sixteenth Annual Report, 1925-26, 5.

<sup>39</sup> In 1915-16 workers reported that 90% of their sixty-two kindergarten children did not speak English.

<sup>40</sup> HSGSA, First Annual Report, 1910-1911, 17; HSGSA, Fifth Annual Report, 1914-15, 6; HSGSA, Second Annual Report, 1911-1912, 19-22.

this group.<sup>41</sup> In the 1940s, the Gables Annual Report noted that the Polish Women's Club was the oldest and most important club at the settlement and that it played an important role in helping the Yankee residents understand the community and gain the support and interest of the neighbors.<sup>42</sup> Linda Moustakis saw this club as an important source of social and emotional sustenance for her mother, who subsequently served as the leader of the Women's Polish American Citizens Club for many years. In her 1978 oral history interview, Wanda Walczak described the Gables as "the way to get out and socialize" for women in the Polish neighborhood.



Figure 64 A mothers and daughters event at House of Seven Gables, 1948; identified participants include Ruth Pasquinelli and mother (third from left), Phyllis Luzinski and mother Mrs. Konovalchik (fourth from left), Lois Merrill and mother Ethel Merrill (fifth from left), Pat Oulette and mother Mrs. Oulette (sixth from left) with niece/cousin Gladys Oulette (seventh from left, standing), Ellen Zbyenski Tobin and mother (far right), Doris Courney and mother (second from right) and Natalie Volmer and Stephie (Pszenny) Volmer (third from right). (House of the Seven Gables)

Polish youth from elsewhere in the city also sometimes entered into the Gables' world, usually through their mothers. Buddy Walker explained that "I only got into it... when my mother started at the club there, and we got into the dancing. And I used to get involved setting up the card parties they used to run in Turner Hall, they'd have whist, military whist, regular whist, and some of them played bridge." Buddy lived in downtown

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<sup>41</sup> HSGSA, Sixth Annual Report, 1915-1916, 7, 11.

<sup>42</sup> HSGSA, Thirty-fifth Annual Report, 1944-45, 5.

Salem, “off the base,” and “didn’t belong to that [Derby Street] group” even though he went to school on Herbert Street. But he did participate at the Gables when he was a boy because his mother was involved with the Polish Women’s Club. “It was a good out for people,” Dorothy Filip recalled. “You went to cooking classes there, you played basketball there, it was a place for the community.”

Finally, in terms of understanding the House of Seven Gables’ project of teaching their immigrant neighbors how to be good middle-class American citizens, it is crucial to note that Poles in Salem, as elsewhere, were well embarked on their own processes of Americanization and socioeconomic mobility, and that their methods of achieving their goals were in many ways strikingly compatible with the settlement house approach. As we have seen in previous sections, Poles in Salem, as elsewhere in the U.S., were selective and strategic about how much to embrace American ways and how much to hold onto particular aspects of Polish identity. For example, they emphatically maintained the Catholic parish at the center of their community but seemed quite ready to let go of Polish language instruction, even when many ethnic leaders promoted it. It seems reasonable to suppose that Polish individuals and families in the Derby Street neighborhood were equally able to embrace some of the House of Seven Gables’ agenda while screening out aspects that did not support their own goals and preferences. There is little direct evidence about these processes of working out the meanings of Polish Americanness at the Gables, but one incident from the 1920s does reveal some of the subtle negotiation that was surely taking place between the Yankee reformers and their Polish neighbors.

When the Women’s Polish American Citizens Club was founded in 1925, it appears to have caused unease not only among some Polish husbands who questioned their wives’ need to become citizens but also at the House of Seven Gables, which ran its own citizenship program. Hedwiga Kohn, in whose living room the WPACC was started, was already very active at the House of Seven Gables, serving on its Salem Social Service Committee and traveling with Gables staff to a national Social Service Convention in Washington DC, where she met Jane Addams, the leading figure in the American settlement-house movement. However, the independent political organizing among the Polish women initially seems to have caused some tension in the relationship with the Gables. It was one thing, perhaps, for a Gables club to become self-directed within the settlement house itself, but something different when members embarked on their own entirely independent enterprise! Hedwiga recalled:



Figure 65 Gables woodworking class (undated). (House of the Seven Gables)

Miss Dunham [the director of the Gables] one day got wind of it and she dropped in to visit with me, and she says, “Mrs. Kohn, what are you doing? Are you spoiling our, House of Seven Gables, our club down there?” Because as I say there were mostly Polish women down there, there were one or two probably American women there. I said, “No, Miss Dunham. These people come from Poland, they don’t understand the American language.” I said, “No, we are preparing them. We want them to become American citizens. We’re preparing them to go and enjoy the Gables.” She was so afraid we were going to break up their club... And I said, “We want to make citizens out of them and we want them to vote.” And I said, “They’ll still enjoy the Gables and you’ll enjoy them too.”

In Hedwiga Kohn’s words, we can hear a quiet but firm voice asserting that the Polish women knew what they were doing and did not particularly need outside help in achieving it—perhaps a reflection of the quite lengthy history of Polish community-based organizing that immigrants had developed in their occupied homeland and brought with them to the U.S. (and with which Hedwiga was very familiar though her father’s prominent involvement in national Polish American organizing).<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 51.



Figure 66 Gables knitting class; caption reads, "Knitting classes were held in the Phippen House once a week between 3 and 4:30 in the afternoon (1934-35)." (House of the Seven Gables)

Productions and social activities featuring cultural traditions from immigrants' native lands were a staple of settlement house programming in the United States—they encouraged mutual respect and cultural pluralism, nurtured unity, and appealed to residents' own aesthetic sensibilities.<sup>44</sup> Gables cultural events supported those ethnic traditions that they viewed as healthy and positive. Generally this meant that they encouraged traditional dance, music, food, and holiday customs—a selective range of activities chosen for their compatibility with foundational settlement house values. Cultural festivals at the Gables were frequently multiethnic, and encouraged respect for the traditions and contributions that different immigrant groups brought to their new country.<sup>45</sup> Some Gables activities introduced American cultural traditions to their neighbors, and there were also some cultural activities that resonated in both Polish and

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<sup>44</sup> Carson, *Settlement Folk*, 103.

<sup>45</sup> In a 1948 International Festival, the Gables offered a program performed by the children that represented many countries, including England (toy orchestra), America (dancing), Ireland (dancing), Italy (singing), Scotland (dancing), South America, France, and Poland (pianist and glee club). There was also a one act play and a fashion show. ("International Festival by House of Seven Gables Settlement," News Clippings Scrapbook, May 1946-April 1950, House of Seven Gables Newsclippings 1909-April 1950, Box 1, House of Seven Gables Archives.)

Anglo-American culture—for example, Christmas caroling that took groups of singers throughout Ward I and ended with a party of food and games in Turner Hall organized by the Polish Women's, Jewish Women's and Gables Mothers clubs.<sup>46</sup> The Gables May Festival featured a maypole dance and festival with a processional, play, dances, and songs. Settlement members performed maypole, tarantella, and Polish and Indian dances.<sup>47</sup> In 1916, 172 children performed national and folk dances from many nations, and there were also music and folk dances by the Gables Mothers' club, the Polish Women's Club, the Men's Club, and brass band and string orchestras.<sup>48</sup> Other events were more focused on a single ethnic group, very often the Polish. At Easter, for example, resident workers joined in the festivities of the Polish Women's Club's annual Easter *Swieconka*—the Polish Easter Feast—at the Gables. This was a very special occasion held in the Gables dining room, featuring many Polish foods.<sup>49</sup> In 1960 the Easter event was held in Turner Hall; at that time the Polish food, dancing, and singing entertained the Board of Directors.<sup>50</sup> Gables residents also supported the political interests of the Poles in the politics of their homeland, when these were perceived to promote democracy and the democratic process. Political events included parties and benefit concerts by Polish musicians—including the Chopin Choral Society—to raise money for Polish war sufferers and refugees. The Gables Polish Women's Club frequently sponsored such events.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> HSGSA, Seventh Annual Report, 1916-1917, 7-8. This custom started in 1914 and included visits to the "Old Ladies" Home, the Bertram Home for Aged Men, and the Sisters of St. Mary's and St. John's schools. The children also made and gave gifts to the inmates of the City Home. Given the participation of the Jewish women in this activity, it is tempting to speculate that the Gables promoted Christmas carolling more as a kind of secular community activity rather than a specifically Christian one.

<sup>47</sup> "May Festival a Big Success," May 10, 1913, News Clippings Scrapbook 1910-1916, Newsclippings 1909-April 1950, Box 1, House of Seven Gables Archives.

<sup>48</sup> HSGSA, Seventh Annual Report, 1916-1917, 6.

<sup>49</sup> HSGSA, Thirty-fourth Annual Report, 1943-44, 6; HSGSA, Forty-first Annual Report, 1950-51, 5; HSGSA, Forty-seventh Annual Report, 1956-57, 5. In 1954-55 they celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Gables Polish Womens' Club (HSGSA, Forty-fifth Annual Report, 1954-55, 5.

<sup>50</sup> HSGSA, Fiftieth Annual Report, 1959-60, 9.

<sup>51</sup> HSGSA, Fifth Annual Report, 1914-15, 3; "Recital for Polish Sufferers," Jan. 12, 1915, News Clippings Scrapbook 1910-1916, Newsclippings 1909-April 1950, Box 1, House of Seven Gables Archives; "Party to Aid Polish Refugees, at Turner Hall, Well Attended," Feb. 21, 1940, News Clippings Scrapbook 1934-1946, Newsclippings 1909-April 1950, Box 1, House of Seven Gables Archives.



Figure 67 A costume party with the Polish Women's Club at the House of Seven Gables (undated). (Linda Moustakis)

The House of Seven Gables, then, was an active part of both Yankee and Polish culture, and served as a meeting-ground for those two worlds. In the recollections of Polish members and workers, we can see occasional glimpses of the combined class and ethnic differences that existed between the two—for example, in Eddie Luzinski's story of how he was interviewed for a job as the caretaker at the Gables. He heard about the position through his wife Phyllis, who came home from knitting class one night with the news that the old caretaker was leaving. After speaking to the Gables director, Eddie was somewhat startled one day when the president of the Salem Five Cents Savings Bank—who was also the president of the Gables board of directors—visited him at his part-time job in the building and plumbing department at Sears Roebuck, wearing a Homburg hat “like Eisenhower used to have” and an expensive black overcoat. Eddie was summoned to an interview in the downtown boardroom at the bank, where he met the other directors and was hired for the job. The difference between the generally working-class lives of most of Salem's Poles and the city's philanthropic and preservationist elites also comes through in some of Beth McIntire's comments about the work of the settlement. Speaking of group outings to Boston with children who had never before been on a train

ride, she noted in 1978 that “It was so wonderful introducing them to all those things we were familiar with.” She also noted the importance of the ritual of dressing up for dinner as a way of expressing to the settlement house’s neighbors the value and privilege associated with the historic buildings: “We really tried to make others realize that we appreciated it, and we tried to share that.” History required manners at the Gables. In one 1960 tour, the tour sheet gave guides specific instructions on how to behave: “PLEASE BE POLITE TO THE GUESTS. Please rise from your chair when the[y] come in. YOU ARE A HOSTESS. You may greet them by saying ‘How-do-you-do. Would you like to sign the register?’”<sup>52</sup>

But although it was clear that many Polish members of the Gables did (and do) deeply appreciate the prestige and history of the site, it was also a place where they felt enough at home to take gentle liberties with that prestige—for example, when the Polish Women’s Club held lively dress-up parties in the formal dining room (Figure 67)—rather than standing in any kind of awe of it. Some former Gables members spoke of the dining room as just another community space, while others recollected playing in the grounds even when they were not officially supposed to, suggesting that neighborhood kids viewed the elite compound as just one more back yard—albeit a somewhat fancier one—in a neighborhood that they felt generally free to ramble in. Polish youth also seem to have adopted an entrepreneurial approach to interpreting Salem’s colonial history in the 1920s and 1930s. Taking advantage of their proximity and familiarity with the Gables, they invited themselves into the tourism industry either by offering to watch tourists’ cars while they were touring the House of Seven Gables or—more adventurously—by offering their services as tour guides. In a 1978 interview, Ed Sobocinski describes how teens would sit on the steps at Turner Hall and yell “outer” when they saw a car with out-of-state plates approaching the corner of Turner and Derby Streets; the first one to call out had “dibs” on serving as an informally-hired guide for that car. Riding on the running boards of the cars, these teens guided their clients around the city, earning a dollar for a one and a half to two hour tour and then returning to the stairs, ready to compete for the

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<sup>52</sup> “The House of the Seven Gables Tour, circa 1960,” Caroline Emmerton Manuscripts, Box 19A, The House of the Seven Gables Archives.



next tourists. “All the kids did it,” Ed noted.<sup>53</sup> Like the Polish women at the House of Seven Gables, they saw Salem’s history—including its elite Yankee legacy—very much as a resource that they could draw on for their own purposes.

Participants in this study had many recollections of staff at the Gables over the years. People from the third generation of Salem’s Poles were best acquainted with the women who ran the settlement from the 1930s through the 1960s, director Beth McIntire and her assistant, Helen Chapin. Eddie Luzinski described Mrs. McIntire and Mrs. Chapin as being “loved by everybody”:

One of the things I always remember somebody told me, they said, “Mrs. McIntire and Helen Chapin, there wasn’t a house in the neighborhood that they wouldn’t be invited.” They were welcomed everywhere. They not only did stuff for the kids, but they did a lot of things for the older folks... They were probably the two best people the Gables ever had.

While most of the staff were of the educated Yankee classes who had founded the settlement house, Poles themselves also worked there. Many third-generation Poles from the Derby Street neighborhood spoke of their memories of working there as young people; Joan Pizzello worked as a chambermaid in the rooms that were once used as an inn (“They were very, very demanding about how they wanted the rooms to look for guests”) while her sister Dorothy Filip was a guide and occasionally got to sleep over in the compound when the resident staff were away and wanted someone on the premises for security. Eddie Luzinski served as the caretaker at the Gables from 1963 until his retirement in 1994, a long tenure that was only part of his family’s association with the site. He was involved in craft classes from an early age, and like many Polish kids from the neighborhood, he found his childhood experiences at the settlement house to be

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<sup>53</sup>The “running board guides” took tourists down Union Street to see Hawthorne’s birthplace, through Federal Street up to Gallows Hill, and then down Chestnut Street, arranging it so they either returned to Turner Street or got off at the Immaculate Conception Church and then walked back to Turner Hall. The city eventually decided to assert some control over these entrepreneurial guides by starting a license system that mandated a test at the Chamber of Commerce on Salem’s historic landmarks. Those who passed got a numbered badge. Apparently there were other locations where tourists could pick up a guide—some hawked their services on Hawthorne Boulevard or by the Roger Conant Statue near the Common. One man interviewed in the 1978 Gables oral history project remembered that he charged \$1.50 to show tourists 32 places, including the Gables, the Old Witch House, and Gallows Hill. One guide allowed visitors a behind the scenes peek in the house he lived in at 14 Mall Street, where Hawthorne wrote *The Scarlet Letter*; he took tourists into his living room, charging an extra quarter for this special addition to the tour. (Information on the running board guides is found in the interviews with Ed Sobocinski, Julian Szetala, and an interviewee who is not credited in the partial transcription found in the oral history files.)

broadening and enlivening; on seeing the wood shop, containing many kinds of tools he'd never seen before, he said, "I was amazed! I was thrilled!" He had an aunt who was involved with the Gables Polish Women's Club, and his wife Phyllis worked at the Gables as a young woman. The Luzinskis' wedding photos were taken on the Gables lawn, and all of their children went on to part-time jobs there as well. The connection went even farther; when a researcher at the Gables found the Luzinski name on a long-ago payroll ledger, Eddie realized that his grandfather, a painter and carpenter, had been hired to do carpentry work for Caroline Emmerton in the early days of the settlement—a four-generation connection that shows the depth of the Polish presence at the Gables.

Another Gables worker recalled by many interviewees in this study was Miss Ruth Bell from Marblehead, who taught dancing classes. Dancing was an important aspect of social life in and out of the Polish community, but not all forms of dancing met with the settlement house's approval. In the words of some of the early Annual Reports at the Gables, "the right kind of dancing"—folk and ballroom styles—promoted "love of grace and ease and charm of manner" and led to "ennobling thoughts,"<sup>54</sup> whereas "commercialized amusements" like dance halls—especially those that sold liquor—gave immigrant youth "a false idea of American life and ideals."<sup>55</sup> To promote "the right kind

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<sup>54</sup> HSGSA, Third Annual Report, 1912-1913, 13.

<sup>55</sup> HSGSA, Fourth Annual Report, 1913-1914, 6. Settlement workers typically expressed alarm and distaste for popular culture and its influence on the morals of young people. Jane Addams wrote about the malign influence of popular culture and the uplifting role of the performing arts in her 1909 book, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*. The antidote to commercialized culture, settlement workers felt, was the positive and uplifting influence of the dramatic arts. Addams and other settlement house leaders promoted drama, pageantry, and music programs for their aesthetic and social value, and to provide healthy alternatives to the exploitive commercialized amusements available in the city. On settlement houses, dancing, and other commercialized entertainments, see Carson, *Settlement Folk*, 115-17.

Settlement houses were not alone in their concerns. They joined efforts by other civic leaders and moral watchdogs to regulate dance halls and provide alternative recreation. In Salem, the mayor asked organizations such as the Gables for help in controlling the dance halls in town, and he appointed two honorary dance hall "censors" just for this purpose. In some cities, the dance halls were regulated by local laws and authorities. Salem's dance hall censors visited dance halls and helped write some regulations modeled after dance hall laws in Cleveland and Boston, but these regulations were never passed. For more, see Carson, *Settlement Folk*, 172; "Resigns as Dance Censor, *Salem Evening News*, June 12, 1914 in News Clippings Scrapbook 1910-1916, Newsclippings 1909-April 1950, Box 1, House of Seven Gables Archives. On commercial culture and the working class see: Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986) and Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours For What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

of dancing,” the Gables offered dance classes and regular weekend dances that became a staple in the social world of Polish youth in the neighborhood and the city. Figure 68 shows a group that appears to be all girls, but many interviewees spoke about the fact that both boys and girls were taught by Miss Bell, and then used their dancing skills at pre-teen and teen dances held in Turner Hall. “The boys loved it,” according to Linda Moustakis. “There are many men that are excellent dancers who learned at the House of Seven Gables.” And Dorothy Filip said, “You can tell anybody who went there to the Friday night dances, because people knew how to foxtrot and how to waltz, you knew all the different steps.” The dances taught by Miss Bell included most of the popular dances of the day—fox trot, cha cha, waltz—along with Polish staples like the polka, the Chelsea Hop (a fast polka variation that had developed in the heavily Polish Chelsea section of Boston) and the *oberek* (a slow polka-waltz).



Figure 68 Miss Bell's dancing class at Turner Hall, 1940s. (House of the Seven Gables)

Like the Chopin Choir rehearsals, the dances at the House of Seven Gables were carefully supervised occasions where young people met each other and pursued what often quickly became romantic attachments. In his 1978 interview, Ed Sobocinski, a member of the Gables in the early part of the century, recalled meeting his wife at the dancing classes: “We grew up together, and between playgrounds and the House of Seven Gables we just kept in touch all those years.” Eddie Luzinski said, “It’s amazing, when you think about it...how many of those teenagers, boys and girls, married each

other, that knew each other.” And as in the Chopin Choir, youth found ways to push the boundaries of what they were officially allowed to do. Frank Tyburc remembered a “first kissing party” organized by his friends at the corner of Hardy and Derby Streets, right next to the Gables. Because his mother refused to let him go, he missed out on this essential piece of education, and felt he was out of the loop at the Gables’ Christmas dance when the lights were dimmed and the dancers were expected to kiss. The experience put him off attending the dance classes at all, which he felt further hampered his romantic chances in his high school years—a sign of how central the dances at the Gables were in the social lives of young people from the neighborhood, and how they were used by participants in ways that sometimes went beyond the carefully moral framework envisioned by the organizers.

## Old Clubs, New Generation

By the time the third generation came of age in Polish Salem, most of the Polish clubs and halls had begun to shift away from their many original missions: providing a financial safety net, encouraging citizenship and registering voters, supporting the Polish state, preserving the Polish language, and so on. However, the crucial social functions of the clubs remained, and they continued to serve as spaces where people came together, shared and celebrated, supported and disputed one another, and passed along their sense of place and belonging as it had been shaped in the city over the course of three generations. Insurance was still an important part of what the societies did, and many participants in this study recalled going up the stairs of St. Joseph Hall to pay their own or their parents’ monthly insurance premiums well into the post-World-War-II decades. As Dorothy Filip remembered, the insurance “was an important thing. We always came monthly, my father, and after my father died, I was in contact with Sophie [Andruskiewicz, then the treasurer] and that, I used to come and she said, ‘Oh, you can just mail it to me every couple of months,’ so that’s what I used to do with my mother’s.” But the financial role of groups like the St. Joseph Society had declined in importance as many of their support functions were shifted to government during the 1930s and afterward.<sup>56</sup> What remained was the clubs’ place in the social life of the community.

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<sup>56</sup> Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State*, 222-29, 231. David Beito has argued that the American welfare state (that is, the mechanisms for helping those who are unemployed, ill, or otherwise temporarily or permanently unable to support themselves) was in fact built largely on the model created by the mutual assistance organizations of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The clubs fulfilled this role in various ways, many of which were highly segregated by gender. Most of the clubhouses included bars, and those spaces were largely a male preserve. Drinking was a common feature of male working-class experience, as Salem businessman Bob Spsychalski explained:

In those days, drinking was certainly looked upon in a different way. It was a rite of passage and it was a way of belonging. Also, you're looking at a blue collar corps of people, and a shot and a beer was a normal thing for these people. And so you can't take today's standards and go back forty years and say shame on these people, because that was how they lived. And everything kind of was—whatever there was, there was a bottle on the table. . . And all the functions—well, it's pretty hard to have a picnic with tea! . . . The beer tent or the beer table or whatever it was was central to the guys. The ladies were in the kitchen cooking the food, and the men were overseeing to it that people were being served. You didn't have to wait for a beer or a shot or something like that.

Mary Nowak acknowledged that some people disapproved of the drinking done at the Polish social clubs, but disputed the view that the organizations were solely about alcohol:

The club, like they say, "They're a bunch of drunks." It wasn't that way. They used to come from work, and they worked in the tannery—you should see, tannery work for men was terrible. Stunk like hell and they had to wear boots and they had to be very careful because the machinery there was dangerous. So they were glad to get out of there. And on the way home they'd drop into a club and have a glass of beer. And one glass leads to another glass. . .

Another important and male-oriented function served by some of the clubs was that they provided a place for members to shower. Several of the club halls—among them the Polish Falcons on Cousins Street and the Polish American Citizens Club/Polish Legion of American Veterans at 9 Daniels Street—installed showers for people who otherwise bathed in big tin tubs with water heated on coal or oil heaters. As in many parts of Salem, many of the apartments in the Derby Street neighborhood were cold-water flats as late as the 1960s, so if people wanted a bath they either needed to heat water on their coal or oil heaters to pour into big tin tubs, or go somewhere where there was hot running water or more capacity for a "real" bath. According to current Polish Legion of American Veterans bar manager Ron Potorski, the three state-of-the-art showers in the basement of the PLAV building on Daniels Street were a big part of the club's attraction; the showers were used frequently by men who wanted to spruce up between work and an evening out. Buddy Walker pointed out that for men who worked in the leather industry, a notoriously hot and dirty job, this was an important amenity: "They'd come home

sweated up and they'd stop in there and get cleaned up. Because none of the houses had baths or showers." Although many people in the community had done well financially, the neighborhood as a whole was still far from wealthy, and these shared amenities and social occasions were a way to create a different kind of collective wealth that enriched people's lives and allowed children of the third generation, as Dorothy Filip remarked, not to realize until high school that they lived in what many people in Salem considered a poor area of the city.

Showers were also associated with sports facilities, something that several of the clubs provided. The big second floor room at St. Joseph Hall was used for basketball games, and the Polish Falcons were well-known locally and nationally for their athletics programs. In sponsoring youth sports, the Polish clubs were overlapping with the kind of programming that was also offered by non-Polish organizations such as the city-run Salem Fraternity, the YMCA, and the House of Seven Gables.<sup>57</sup> Sports, like military service, provided a way for many working-class boys to assert and strengthen themselves. At the same time, cheering for local sports teams and heroes helped create a sense of community identity and solidarity. Dorothy Stupakiewicz recalls her mother's brother Al, whose athletic prowess was a source of both personal and shared fame:

[He was] a football player, but he'd be up the streets, they'd all be fighting, and they all ganged up on my uncle, because he was the shortest one. . . . My uncle was just such a little runt, but he was very fast. . . . My mother would have to doctor him up, all his bruises, all his bleedings. . . . So one day my uncle put it in his head, he says, "I'm going to build myself up." Because in this area, too, there was a lot of wrestling going on and a lot of weight-builders. . . . And finally. . . he punched one of the kids, he punched one of them out, and punched another one, punched them all so they all ran away and all ran home. And their parents, one by one they came up with a policeman, knocking on the door, saying, "Your kid beat up—Where'd he get all these bruises?" "Oh, Gussie did it. Gussie did it." . . . Well, the policemen got to the door, they opened the door and they see this little short kid and he looked at the tall kid he's standing with, and there's no way. There's no way that this little runt can beat this one up! But after that they left him alone. And when he went to high school, he was—he played football, and they'd always pass the ball to him because he was fast and nobody could catch him. So he built up his reputation that way. And that was the first year that the football team from Salem High went out to California. They used to go to Florida and play down in Florida, but that was kind of like a routine thing. But this one time I guess they had won so much, I think it was in '33

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<sup>57</sup> The 1915-16 annual report for the House of the Seven Gables notes that Turner Hall, the Gables' community building, also added hot and cold showers around 1915, probably in conjunction with its active athletics program.

or '34. . . Champion team. So they went out to California, they met the actors and actresses and stuff, you know, and my little grandmother was at home, you know, get a call on the phone all the way from California, you know! She was so happy. And they'd listen to the game on. . .the radio, they would all gather around.

If sports and bars were mostly male-gendered spaces and activities, weddings, parties, and similar social events were more inclusive occasions, attended by women, men, and often children as well. This final section of the chapter will take a brief look at the memories of dances, parties, and other events that third-generation Poles recalled from the middle part of the century.

We begin with 1949—the year that the St. Joseph Society celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. That year, Buddy Walker, then a 24-year-old World War II veteran, started a polka band called the Warszawski Orchestra which came to be a staple of the entertainment and social scene at the Polish clubs and halls, including St. Joseph Hall. Buddy began to play music within local and nationally-supported youth programs—first the local Sea Scouts troupe, where he encountered the washtub bass in his early teens, and later the city-run Salem Fraternity, which offered a music program as part of a WPA project during the Depression. At that time, polka was just emerging as a recognizable musical form that was associated with Polish culture but was also distinctly American.<sup>58</sup> Polka was a blend of Polish folk and dance forms with American popular forms such as jazz and swing, capitalizing in part on recording companies' interest in recording ethnic and “race” music starting in the 1910s.<sup>59</sup> Polkas were popularized widely through radio programs; Salem's WESX station had a number of Polish programs which featured live and recorded music. Even while a national polka genre was developing, though, local variations remained. Buddy recalls that when the bands played in Rhode Island, “you had to play a real fast clip,” while Lawrence and Chelsea had their own local versions of the polka (the Lawrence Hop and Chelsea Hop respectively). Speaking of the faster variations, Buddy noted, “When you get a nice beat rolling. . .it's like on a horse, you're coming down the stretch, look out, here we come!”

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<sup>58</sup> Polka music emerged first on the east coast between the 1930s and the 1950s, with a discernibly different “Chicago style” developing in the Midwest in the 1950s and 1960s. David J. Jackson, “Just another day in a new Polonia: contemporary Polish-American polka music,” *Popular Music and Society* 26:4 (December 2003).

<sup>59</sup> Cygan, “Inventing Polonia,” 230.

Buddy quickly began playing with small local dance bands, including a polka group called the Polka Dots. He got his chance to play with one of the bigger-name ensembles from the area, the Krakowiacki Orchestra, by filling in for their unreliable bass player (something of a “little wanderer,” as Buddy described him) and eventually working into their roster while he was still in his teens. They played the polka circuit throughout eastern New England, including at Boston’s Ritz Ballroom and venues in Rhode Island and New Hampshire. The bigger bands, with nine or ten pieces, tended to play bigger dances and events at large ballrooms, while smaller ensembles covered most of the weddings, showers, and smaller-scale occasions. Instrumentation for east-coast style polka always included the accordion—the characteristic instrument of the polka—along with drums, bass, saxophone, and trumpet. Repertoire was a mix of identifiably Polish forms and other kinds of dances: “The polkas were like every third set, you’d do a set of polka, Polish stuff, and then you’d do big band dancing stuff. Of course, the waltzes you mix both the Polish and the regular. And then we had the other dance, the *Oberek*, that was in there, too, we’d sneak them in there.”

Although it was the better-known Krakowiacki Orchestra that played at the St. Joseph Society’s fiftieth anniversary celebration in 1949, the new Warszawski Orchestra quickly became a fixture in the local Polish musical scene, often playing at wedding showers on weeknights and weddings on the weekends, as well as club functions and special occasions. During its heyday, the group was performing three or four nights a week, while Buddy, a widower, was also working full-time as an auto mechanic and raising a family of seven children. He played countless weddings and showers in the St. Joseph Hall and the other Polish venues in and around Salem, and frequently runs into people who remind him that he performed at their weddings: “We went to an affair the other day—‘Buddy!’ ‘What?’ ‘Remember me?’ I said, ‘Truthfully, no. I’m in trouble.’ ‘You played my wedding 40 years ago.’ Gee—and you’re still talking to me?” In the old days, Buddy recalls, the band would receive a set fee for playing for the dancing, but there was usually the option of performing a wedding march as the newly-married couple arrived, for which the musicians could expect to receive tips:

So you’d get at the door before the crowd would come and you’d, you know, you’d yell in Polish “*marcha a plana*,” you know, a march for the mister and missus. And you’d break into a march and you’d play until they got seated. Well, usually they’d tip you. And of all the places they’d put the money in a slot in the bass fiddle. A lot of them that didn’t have a bass fiddle, they’d have a little, well, like the trumpet



player had the musical hat there, they'd throw the money in the hat and stuff. It was comical to see us shaking the money out before we'd sit down to eat, you know, all the coins out and divvying it up!

Polka music, the local bands, and the occasions where they performed were central to the sense of ethnicity and community among assimilated third-generation Poles in Salem and elsewhere in the U.S. Polka lyrics have, at times, spoken about most of the major issues and concerns within Polonia, ranging from patriotism to celebrations of home and work to a kind of joking acknowledgement of (and resistance to) Polish ethnic stereotypes. Polkas also frequently evoke a sense of place-attachment in relation to Polish or American places.<sup>60</sup> One of the Warszawski Orchestra's staple numbers, "Genevieve's Waltz," was written by band member Tony Malionek to honor Buddy's mother, Genevieve (Pszenny) Wolkiewicz, who died in 2001. And Buddy recalled one local man who always requested a particular song that made him think of Poland. He would tell Buddy,



Figure 69 Buddy Walker's Warszawski Orchestra in 1952 at the Knights of Columbus in Salem; from left to right, Bob Hayes on trombone, Boley Cecelski on drums, Wally Okker on trumpet, Henry "Bill" Kocinski on saxophone, Buddy Walker on bass, and Peter Rambis on accordian. (Warszawski Orchestra)

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<sup>60</sup> Jackson, "Just another day."

“Play for me,” you know, in Polish, “play for me.” Well, there’s a song, “Evening Bells,” *Wieczór Nizvun*, and it’s about how the bells tolled when he left Poland and “when I get married the bells were ringing” and now when he walks the streets his heart goes back to Poland when he hears the evening Angelus there—and he’d sit there and tears would be coming down and he’d cry, he’d cry!

Weddings and other important parties in Polish Salem followed a regular pattern in the middle years of the twentieth century, even for younger community members who sometimes wanted to make changes in the way things were done. The caterer of choice was Stanley Grabas, a man of Albanian background who had a little storefront next to Witkos’s on Derby Street (see Figure 39). The frequent use of Grabas as a caterer meant that, as Frank Tyburc noted, “The food was always the same. You know, for years and years and years, it was mostly you get your turkey and your mashed potatoes and your peas, and you get your little favors with the little candy-covered...hazelnuts.”

Serious drinking was often an aspect of weddings and other social occasions; Mary Nowak remembered, “They used to have, when they had weddings, they’d have a bottle, every ten people had a bottle of whisky. There’s always a lot of whisky.” Bob Spsychalski, who continues to run the funeral home business that his father started in the 1940s, recalls that when he was a child living with his family above the funeral parlor, guests from wakes would sometimes come upstairs, sent by his father, to have a shot of liquor from a bottle in the family’s own liquor cabinet. Officially the funeral home could not offer alcohol, but it was an understood aspect of what the funeral director did and what a Polish gathering was. Linda Moustakis also spoke about the importance of wakes as occasions when people in the community came together:

It was a gathering. . . . There was always a kitchen in the back with a bottle of whisky, and the men would go out there and proceed to become mellow, and the women loved to talk! . . . They had many dances also, but [a wake] was sort of a social gathering, and you did many things—you achieved many duties. You were a good neighbor, a good relative, you fulfilled your duty of paying respects to the dead, and you had a good time. [laughs] And you caught up on all the gossip, you know.

While St. Joseph Hall and the other clubs hosted plenty of wedding showers and other kinds of gatherings, large-scale parties more often took place at the Falcons Hall, which could accommodate more people. Joan Pizzello and Dorothy Filip’s weddings were both at the Falcons:

*Dorothy:* Ours were big weddings!

*Joan:* My father was so methodical. He would keep a small notebook and he would keep track of every expense to the penny. And he had three daughters. So he was being very wise. By the time he got to hers, this was down pat!

*Dorothy:* How much liquor at the bar—

*Joan:* How much chicken salad for the shower—

*Dorothy:* How much each plate was from Grabas the Caterer—

*Joan:* It was very funny. I didn't want to do that. I didn't want a Polish wedding. I wanted to have my wedding at the [Hawthorne] Hotel and just a very small, very quiet, very classy wedding. But I lost that battle. He insisted this was what we were going to do and that was what we did. And that was fine. It was okay, it all worked out.

*Interviewer:* So in terms of making it a Polish wedding, it's that you have it at the Polish hall, you'd have the polka band—

*Joan:* And there were particular caterers—Grabas—

*Dorothy:* And you'd often have your shower, and a shower meant that you'd have, all the ladies got together and then the men came later to eat a meal. There'd be a whole meal and there would be an open bar.

*Joan:* Just an open bar with whisky and beer.

*Dorothy:* And then the orchestra would come later, the Warszawiaki, and there'd be dancing.

*Joan:* I still have the bottle that [my father] bought, the bottle was like this big, it was whisky. I use it as a doorstop. I have it as a doorstop in my kitchen now.

*Dorothy:* And when you had a Polish wedding it was similar to, this custom that they have now in Eastern Europe and Russia, you came in the doorway, you had salt and bread—

*Joan::* The mother of the bride—

*Dorothy:* The mother of the bride would bring the salt and the brea.

*Joan:* It was so that you would always have food and you would be blessed.

*Interviewer:* Were here other customs or things that went along with the Polish wedding?

*Dorothy:* I'm just trying to think—just the regular customs, you'd dance with your father—

*Joan:* All the usual things.

*Dorothy:* And the clinking of the glasses.

*Joan:* But at a Polish wedding, when they set up the tables, they would set the tables

up at the Falcons and the tables would be long banquet tables. And after the food was finished, well, everybody just moved off to the side and they would clear all the tables and they'd drop 'em and unscrew the legs and then they'd put some stuff, sweep—and you're sitting there watching all of this going on.

*DorothyL:* But they would be cleaned up, and that's what they would do at things here, too, you know.

*Joan:* And they would hustle around, you know.

*Dorothy:* Then they would put some kind of stuff to make the floors slippery when you danced! [laughs]

*Interviewer:* So this was clearing tables to get everything out of the way—

*Joan:* Get everything out of the way, now they're going to dance.

*Dorothy:* Living, you know, in close proximity to St. Joseph's here, there was usually, every weekend there was something going on, either a shower or a wedding—

*Joan:* They had the windows open—

*Dorothy:* And you could hear it.

*Joan:* There were things happening.

*Dorothy:* And often you'd sit across the street and listen to the music, if you were in your back yard!

*Interviewer:* So was it pretty much always the Warszawiaki?

*Joan:* I don't remember anybody else.

*Dorothy:* Until later on, there were a few other orchestras that would come in, the Happy Louie, but that was later on when Happy Louie came in. And then they had the ones that played at, in Peabody a lot, I can't remember the name of them.

*Interviewer:* So there was a small number—

*Dorothy:* Yeah. The Warszawiaki were the ones.

In a way, weddings were events for the entire community. In Richard Swiniuch's words, "Everybody went to everybody's wedding!" Joan Davidowicz recalled,

[If] there was a wedding going on and it was upstairs—because St. Joseph's, the hall was upstairs—and I can remember, you'd just go up there, the kids, all the neighborhood kids, "Oh, somebody's getting married," right up the stairs, see who it was, wonderful little old aunts were around, yeah, it was like, okay, you know, you want it, they'd give you something, a piece of cake, or they'd give you something to eat. And then they'd say like, "Okay, now, out." They didn't want you loitering. Children could come in, they'd give you a little treat. And you'd bank on that. And then it was like, "Okay."

Children who were more official guests also had a role to play. Frank Tyburc remembered, “The thrill would be when the evening was over and they were going to dance, then as kids they let us help, not the tables, they were too heavy, but we would take the chairs and push them off to the sides and stuff like that. And then once the orchestra started it was like, oh, so loud and everything—it was wonderful.”

Social events at the Polish clubhouses—showers, weddings, wakes, and celebrations of many kinds—brought together people of different ages and reinforced the many layers of connection among extended families and other networks of association. As they marked the life changes of individual people, couples, and families, Salem’s Poles continued to create and reshape their shared sense of ethnic identity and a sense of place for themselves as a community. That sense of place and belonging continues to animate the memories of the last generation to grow up in “the old neighborhood.”

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### NEIGHBORS AND PARTNERS: POLISH SALEM AND SALEM MARITIME NHS TODAY

In the summer of 2009, as this report was being completed, two milestones were reached in Salem's Polish community. The first, on June 29, was the death of Mary (Halik) Nowak at the age of 99. Born in Poland in 1910, Mary arrived in Salem in 1913 as an immigrant whose long lifespan encompassed much of the history of Poles in the city. Her passing was seen by many people as representing the end of an era of direct connection with earlier generations' experience of being both Polish and American. For this study, Mary's recollections provided a unique glimpse into those experiences and into the feistiness and good humor so characteristic of this community as we encountered it during the study. Mary attended the June 1 party at St. Joseph Hall that marked the centenary of the opening of the Hall and the conclusion of research for this project; she was the first to arrive (on foot, having walked from her own home on Essex Street), first in line at the buffet table, and one of the last to depart, having participated to the full in the conviviality and reflection of the evening.



Figure 70 Mary (Halik) Nowak, 1910-2009.  
(Nowak family)



Figure 71 In this May 2008 photo, Linda Moustakis, Chuck Smythe of the National Park Service Ethnography Program, and Mary Nowak stand in front of the window exhibit at St. Joseph Hall.

Buddy Walker's Warszawski Orchestra provided music for that occasion, as they have done for countless parties and events in Polish Salem. Later in the summer, at an event at the Polish school auditorium on St. Peter Street, the band celebrated its own milestone: the sixtieth anniversary of its founding in 1949. On the same weekend, they performed at the Salem Maritime Festival, a regular stop on their itinerary for many years and a reflection of the relationship that the national park has developed with people in the Polish community over time.



Figure 72 At the 2009 Salem Maritime Festival, as in previous years, Buddy Walker's Warszawski Orchestra was one of the attractions in the music tent (on left), across the street from St. Joseph Hall.

The two occasions—Mary Nowak’s passing and the sixtieth anniversary of Buddy Walker’s band—say a good deal about Salem’s Polish community in the early years of the twenty-first century, and they raise questions about how the park and members of the community might maintain and strengthen their relationship. This chapter will take stock of the present-day community and will conclude with some recommendations for future collaboration and research.



Figure 73 Members of Buddy Walker’s Warszawski Orchestra (left to right, Buddy Walker, Chuck Becker, Tony Malionek) perform at a June 1, 2009 gathering at St. Joseph Hall to celebrate the completion of research for this study.

## **Salem’s Polish Community Today**

The last decades of the twentieth century saw many social and spatial changes in Salem’s Derby Street neighborhood. Many of the triple-deckers formerly referred to as “tenements” have seen a new lease on life as condominiums. These are occupied mostly by young urban professionals, many of whom commute to work in Boston instead of Salem or the surrounding towns. One former center in Polish Salem, the Polish Falcons Hall on Cousins Street (itself a former factory), has been converted into condominiums (Figure 74). In many other places, there are gaps in the built environment. Many of



these were prompted by the coming of the car-centered society that developed in most American places after World War II—an enormous change from the 1920s, when young Anthony Nowak was the only young man among Mary Halik’s peers who owned a car. As with older areas of many New England cities, Salem’s Polish neighborhood, with its small, tightly-packed buildings and narrow streets, was a tight fit for cars, whether moving or parked. The demand for more parking spaces contributed directly or indirectly to the demolition of many buildings, particularly those that were in poor repair. Among these were two of the sites examined in the previous chapter: Turner Hall at the House of Seven Gables and the old Polish school complex on Herbert Street.



Figure 74 The former industrial building at Cousins and English Streets was converted to condominiums in 2004 after serving as the Polish Falcons Hall for many years.

Turner Hall, the former Seaman’s Bethel that served as a meeting-place for many children and women from the Polish community starting in 1908, was torn down in 1967. Along with several mostly residential buildings north and west of the main House of Seven Gables, the hall was demolished in order to create more parking for visitors to the historic site. Joseph and Hedwiga Kohn’s son Chester, who recalled that he “spent most of my childhood days at the Gables,” missed the building when it was gone: “In fact, I think I shed a tear or two when I saw it being torn down, because it was the next best place to home to be after school hours.” While the loss of Turner Hall left a gap in the neighborhood, the House of Seven Gables absorbed another building that had once been part of the network of Polish clubs and organizations along Derby Street: the brick structure on the northwest corner of Derby and Turner Streets that was first a sea-captain’s mansion, then a home for elderly men, and later the clubhouse for the group

known as the “Three Nickels,” or *Grupa 555* of the Polish National Alliance.<sup>1</sup> Around 1967, this building was purchased by the House of Seven Gables to serve as its main settlement house center. Re-named Emmerton Hall, it still serves that function today. Polish cultural traditions were still represented in Gables programming up through the 1980s, with events sometimes serving as reunions for many older members of the community who had lost touch since their earlier days at the Gables.<sup>2</sup> By and large, however, the settlement house’s constituency has changed, both ethnically geographically, with most of the pre-school and school-aged children now coming from outside Ward 1.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 75 116 Derby Street, formerly the “Three Nickels”

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix F on the history of this and other Polish fraternal organizations in the neighborhood. On the transfer of ownership, see Stevenson, *History of the House of Seven Gables*, 8.

<sup>2</sup> One such event was the celebration of “Constitution Day” in March 1982. (Polish Constitution Day is celebrated in early May, so it is not clear whether this was intended as an approximation of the official holiday.) This Polish Day festival was held on Turner Street, from Derby Street down to the harbor; it featured sales booths of Polish arts and crafts and foods, and Polish folk dancing. The same year, the Gables started a senior drop-in center which continues to operate and attracts many older Polish Salemites, particularly women. HSGSA, 73<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report, 1982, 5. HSGSA, 70<sup>th</sup> Annual Report, 1979-80, 8; HSGSA, 71<sup>st</sup> Annual Report, 1980-81, 8; HSGSA, 67<sup>th</sup> Annual Report, 1976-77, 12; HSGSA, 68<sup>th</sup> Annual Report, 1977-78, 9; HSGSA, 71<sup>st</sup> Annual Report, 1980-81, 11; HSGSA, 72<sup>nd</sup> Annual Report, 1981-82, 8, 10, 11; HSGSA, 73<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report, 1982, 13.

<sup>3</sup> In 2009, the House of Seven Gables offers year-round programming for preschool and school age children. These programs take place in the Settlement House in Emmerton Hall. The families of Settlement students receive a special membership to the House of Seven Gables, with access to all grounds, buildings and programs, retaining the historic connection between settlement and museum. Programming is more extensive and varied than early in the twentieth century, the budget is larger and receives public funding, and the Settlement serves more people.

A few blocks away, the old Polish school complex on Herbert Street was deemed to be so dilapidated by the 1950s that the community decided to construct an entirely new school. The parish successfully undertook a large-scale fundraising campaign to support this goal, and built a much more modern facility on newly-purchased land next to the church and rectory on St. Peter Street, opening it in 1960.<sup>4</sup> A new convent for the Felician sisters was also built in 1968 on land at 7 Howard Street, at the rear of the church. All of the old St. John the Baptist buildings on Herbert and Union Streets were razed in 1970; the two plots of land remain parking lots today (see Figure 18).

However, these efforts were not enough to reverse a larger trend of declining enrollment in Polish parochial schools in general in this era. Enrollments were dropping throughout Polish America, and there was also an increasing scarcity of teaching sisters. By 1971, a survey of Polish schools showed that only 20% still taught Polish history and culture; aside from their function as a site for religious education, the schools were less and less distinctively Polish, which had been their original reason for existing.<sup>5</sup> In June 1977, the parish took the difficult step of closing the school, which today is used only for occasional special events (see Figure 79).



Figure 76 St. John the Baptist School, built in 1960 and closed in 1977, St. Peter Street.

The site of the old firehouse at the foot of Bentley Street, long a meeting place for a variety of Polish groups in Salem, has taken on a different significance in the city's memory. When a fire destroyed the building in the mid-1960s, the property stood vacant

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<sup>4</sup>Information about the building of the new school is from Hunter et al., *Community Organization*, and from interviews.

<sup>5</sup>Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 123-24.

for several years. Then, in February of 1974, former city councillor and community leader Louis Swiniuch died at the age of 60. His son Richard had just been elected to his own first term on the city council, and Richard found it sad that his father—whom he called “my idol”—was not there to see his son’s inauguration into the city’s political world. One of Richard’s first projects as a city councillor, along with others who had served with his father for many years, was to turn the former firehouse site into a small park dedicated to Louis Swiniuch. Tourists often stop and sit in the beautifully landscaped spot, as do local people including Richard Swiniuch himself, who said, “I go by there, I’ll sit sometimes, just sit, you know, and kind of reminisce about a lot of things in life.”



Figure 77 A plaque in Swiniuch Park memorializes Salem city councillor Louis Swiniuch, who died in 1974.

Swiniuch and several other interviewees in this project remain members of the Polish Legion of American Veterans, which is still based at 9 Daniels Street—the only remaining Polish social club in the Derby Street neighborhood. Membership today is not limited to Polish Americans; the national PLAV dropped its ethnic requirement in 1982, and locally, many of the members are now non-Polish veterans. However, there is still a core group from the Polish community, including members of the Ladies Auxilliary. PLAV members still attend a special Mass at St. John the Baptist Church on Veterans Day and Memorial Day. Richard Swiniuch spoke about the group’s role as the last vestige of the neighborhood’s once-dynamic network of Polish clubs:

We're still active, but our membership is drawing down to a fraction, you know. They're all dying off, all my friends. Because I'm a middle-of-the-roader, I'm 67. [People in their] 50s, they don't care, they're not there. And the guys that are older than me are gone, with the exception of the commander. But the commander didn't start there, he started in—he was in the Polish occupation army, after the war. He was a prisoner during the war. And he came here, I don't know what year, 1950, something like that. . . He's been truly dedicated, but he's getting older. . . But that's what's happening with our organization. It'll be gone one of these days. . .

Several of the other Polish clubs and groups do still exist in some form—for example, the Polish Falcons, Women's Polish American Citizens Club, and even the St. Joseph Society, which re-formed as the Society of St. Joseph after the Hall was sold to the national park in 1988. Like some of the other older “fraternals,” the Society of St. Joseph remains a local chapter of a national organization (in this case, the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America) and continues to offer insurance policies to its membership.

St. John the Baptist Church remains the institutional heart of Salem's Polish community, but it, too, has changed considerably in recent decades, and its long-term future is up to question. The celebration of the parish's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the elation over the election of a Polish Pope, Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II) in 1978 was tempered by the fact that the “new” school and convent had been closed the previous year, reflecting the shift away from parochial education that could be seen in many long-settled ethnic communities in the U.S.<sup>6</sup> Monsignor Sikora resigned for health reasons in 1968, and Rev. Francis Strykowski was appointed in his place. “Father Stry,” as he was recalled by several interviewees in this study, ministered to the parish until his death in 1992. Rev. Ferdinand Slejzer, a Salem native who had served at other area churches, came out of retirement to fill the position of administrator, but only for a brief time.<sup>7</sup> Father Stanley Parfienczyk, a native Pole who had previously served in another diocese, then became administrator. He was “incardinated” or brought under the auspices of the Boston archdiocese in 1997 and made pastor in 2001, a position he still holds.

In the U.S., Polish parishes, like those of other ethnic groups, are being closed throughout the country as the American Catholic Church deals with declining attendance,

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<sup>6</sup> The Catholic Church in Poland was a key player in the Solidarity-era anti-Soviet resistance movement. Although it has become more conservative in the post-Soviet years, it retains very high status in Polish society and carries weight in European Catholicism in general, even after the death of Pope John Paul II in 2005; a quarter of all Catholic priests in Europe are Polish. See Lukowski and Zawadski, *Concise History*, 324.

<sup>7</sup> Information about Father Slejzer was found in his obituary in the Salem News, August 20, 2002.

a shortage of new priests, and a financial crisis in the wake of lawsuits over clergy sexual abuse. The aging and loss of urban ethnic populations has been one important factor in church closings, but church leaders are also acting out of a conviction that ethnic parishes weaken the Catholic Church in the U.S. as a whole by fragmenting its declining membership. In this philosophy we can hear an echo of the debates a century ago about whether it was wiser to create specific ethnic parishes or to insist that new immigrants—like the Poles—adapt themselves to the existing Irish-headed American Catholic Church. Some Polish and other older ethnic parishes have resisted the closure of their churches, again echoing earlier debates over ownership and control of the church property and buildings, but most have seen the decisions as irrevocable and somewhat inevitable.<sup>8</sup>

The survival of Salem's Polish church when so many parishes are being closed and amalgamated is due to the presence of a Polish-born, Polish-speaking priest and to the recent influx of new parishioners from among the recent Polish immigrants in the area.<sup>9</sup> These new immigrants are mostly young people with children who have revived the parish to a very large extent. There is even a new Polish grocery store in the city retail center close to the church; this store stays open on Sunday afternoons in order to serve the younger parishioners who come from more than a dozen towns around Salem. However, the newer immigrants and older Polish Americans have not merged to any significant extent, showing the kind of "immigrants and ethnics" division that

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<sup>8</sup>In 2004, the Boston Archdiocese closed 65 of its 357 parishes, including nine of the area's 15 Polish parishes; Polish churches in Peabody (a "daughter" church of St. John the Baptist in Salem, having been founded by Peabody-based members of St. John's in 1927), Haverhill, and Ipswich are among those that have been closed. St. Michael's Church in Peabody illustrates one strategy that Poles from closed parishes have used to hold together the sense of community that was traditionally centered around the parish. Building on the very long Polish and Polish American tradition of community organizing and collaboration, Poles in Peabody have shifted some of the social network of the parish into non-church organizations such as the St. Joseph's Faith Community, the St. Michael's Society, and the United Polish Organizations, a long-standing umbrella group that coordinated activities among the many groups in Polonia. At a reunion in 2007, former parishioners and their supporters gathered to reminisce about their lost parish, recalling its history and reinforcing the social and ethnic ties that still connect them to one another. For background on Polish parish closings and the Peabody case in particular, see Stas Kmiec, "More 'Ethnic Cleansing' of Polish Parishes," *Polish American Journal* (September 2004) and Amanda McGregor, "Friends reconnect in remembrance of Polish parish," *Salem News*, August 13, 2007.

<sup>9</sup>Information about the current state of the parish was gathered from recent interviews with parishioners. These are not quoted directly or cited by name in order not to put any particular person "on record" as speaking for the parish as a whole or about parish business in an official capacity.

Mary Patrice Erdmans has documented in other Polish American communities.<sup>10</sup> In interviews with older parishioners, it was clear that the newer people are seen as a very important resource for the parish, since their presence fulfills the core St. John the Baptist mission of ministering to the Poles in America and keeps the parish from being closed as so many others have been. But it was also clear that the new parishioners have very different concerns and backgrounds than the older members, and that there is occasional tension or at least a good deal of social, generational, and linguistic distance between them. In essence, there are two coexisting parishes within St. John's, one attending the Polish-language Mass in the upstairs church and the other the later English Mass in the downstairs chapel. One long-time parishioner, referring to the newer members as "the Polonia," defined this term as meaning "the real, true, born-in-Poland people... We're differentiating those that are still demanding to hold their customs [from] those of us who have *memories* of customs."



Figure 78 In this group photo from a St. John the Baptist Church parish picnic in 1929, seemingly taken on Salem Common, Monsignor Sikora is seated sixth from left in the second row, with women, men, and children from the parish surrounding him. (Salem Maritime NHS)

<sup>10</sup> Mary Patrice Erdmans, *Opposite Poles: Immigrants and Ethnicity in Polish Chicago, 1976-1990* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

One local custom that has endured sporadically in Salem is the “Polish picnic,” an all-parish gathering that was formerly for members of the parish only but that became almost a mini ethnic festival open to the public and featuring food, music, children’s games, and an opportunity for socializing and celebration of the parish’s ethnic identity and history. Buddy Walker recalled that the picnics were important in teaching younger members of the community how to dance, as children’s aunts and uncles would “take them out and they’d, you know, hop and—they’d get that rhythm into them and that movement, and then after a while, before you know it, they could skip along pretty good.” At the 2008 Polish picnic at St. John the Baptist Church, a two-man band performed polka and other music for a large audience, while people bought and ate the traditional Polish foods and visited in the hall and parking lot of the former parish school. In 2009, however, there was apparently an extended debate between “old” and “new” parishioners about how or whether the parish picnic should take place, leading some older parish members to wonder how much longer the tradition would continue.

It is in relationships of kinship and friendship, religious customs, sites of memory and association, holiday traditions, and music that people descended from Salem’s older Polish immigrants find the strongest sense of themselves as a distinct ethnic community. Many of our interviewees spoke of continuing Christmas and Easter traditions, although the older practice of having an odd number of meatless dishes at Christmas Eve dinner is no longer followed in most households. Mary Nowak, at the age of nearly a hundred, expressed the adaptable spirit of this community in speaking about one of the core social and religious occasions of the Polish American year:

None of my kids married Polish! But they like the Polish customs. We have the night before Christmas *Wigilia*, we have that all the time. The kids say, “Well, where are we going now,” it’s split, because everybody’s got families, and they’re all doing it. And it makes you feel so good! . . . But now, my daughter goes to her daughter, down the Cape, for Christmas, she comes back and she says, “Mother, you’d never guess what I ate last night.” I said, “No, what’d you have?” “We had ham.” I said, “Oh, my God, really? Well, you had ham. So it’s new times.” You’ve got to live with it! . . . And you know what, this is the last time, I had a very bad cold, I didn’t want to go to none of the kids, here, here, or there, so on, so I didn’t go to anybody, but I had on my table, I had my *oplatek* and I had eleven different dishes. . . A little bit of this, a little bit of that, and I just sat there and I had my booze [laughs]—It was good. It was *good*!





Figure 79 At the 2008 Polish picnic at St. John the Baptist Church, parishioners and others ate traditional Polish foods and socialized with old friends.

Bob Spychalski, who runs a funeral home that serves many Polish families, noted that there are usually just vestiges of ethnic expression in funerals and weddings among today's Polish Americans. For example, families will often choose red and white flowers—the Polish colors—for a funeral, particularly for older relatives who have died.

“You can kind of get a sense that they’re searching for something from the old days,” he said. A trustee at St. John the Baptist Church, Bob is philosophical about the possibility that the retirement of the current priest or the slowing of new Polish immigration to the area will likely mean that the parish will be closed:

I know there’s a horizon, but let’s just keep focused on what we can do now. Because if I look at the horizon, I’m going to focus on the horizon, and I’m going to say, ‘You know, if the end is there, why do we bother?’ Whereas I look at it as, you know, we have a parish, nothing lasts forever, I wouldn’t not take care of my mom because she’s going to die, let’s not look and say ‘let’s not take care of the parish because we’re going to die,’ let’s just be as healthy as we can and whatever happens is going to happen. Because we’re not going to have the power to fight it anyway. It’s the serenity prayer. Everything I do in my life is—is there a chance that we can control it? And if we can’t, you have to understand and let it go.

One revealing point of disconnection between Polish Americans and younger people from Poland itself is their differing approaches to polka. For Polish Americans, the polka is inextricably a part of their family and community memories, an expression of the ethnic identity that Poles established for themselves in America, particularly urban American places. Polka was an important aspect of Polish ethnic revivalism in the 1970s, when performers like Happy Louie (born Louis Dusseault in Ware, Massachusetts) found new popularity among a younger generation of Polish Americans, including many in Salem.<sup>11</sup> For younger people from Poland itself, however, polka is akin to country-and-western music—something they associate with older, less sophisticated musical tastes. Buddy Walker recalls playing polkas for visiting Polish sailors from a tall ship that came in to Salem as part of the U.S. Bicentennial celebrations, only to be told in Polish by the visitors, “Hey, that’s cowboy music. Play tango!” This tension has arisen in parish discussions about the entertainment at parish picnics, where younger parishioners want more “modern” music than the Warszawski Orchestra plays. While polka has experienced something of a comeback among younger people of Polish American background in recent years, its core audience remains the older generation who “got that rhythm into them” in their childhood at parish picnics, family weddings, and countless other community occasions.

Our overview of present-day Polish Salem concludes with another somewhat bittersweet reflection by Bob Spychalski on the changes he has seen in the city’s ethnic

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<sup>11</sup> Jackson, “Just another day.”

neighborhoods, and on the importance of memory and recollection in maintaining a sense of how this community of people once shaped—and were shaped by—this urban place:

The neighborhoods are not so much there, but they're still in my mind. It doesn't take much to hold the neighborhood... I know it's not much Polish down there now—you can look at the property values...and when they're sky high, that's not the Polish neighborhood, that's not the blue-collar factory neighborhood. Maybe I'm becoming like my ancestors, I still remember all these old things, and I still hold onto the French neighborhood, the Italian neighborhood, and this and that. But I also am very much aware it's not quite—it's nothing like the way it was. Not quite.

There is undoubtedly an element of nostalgia in the recollections that have informed this study of St. Joseph Hall, the community that created it, and ethnic neighborhood that it was a part of. Scholars, aware of the effects of selective memory and the dangers of declaring any group of people to be “vanishing” or “lost,” are often suspicious of taking nostalgic views of the past, and so the authors of this report join with Salem Maritime NHS Chief of Cultural Resources Dave Kayser in affirming, as the Foreword states, that Polish Salem is alive and well as it moves into its fourth and fifth generations in the city and beyond. But there is also no doubt that the specific sense of Polish community that was rooted in the Derby Street neighborhood will change greatly—and is already changing—as first-hand memories of that experience fade. In that way, this study does contribute to a somewhat nostalgic and bittersweet recollection of a body of experience that exists primarily in memory, and it is important to honor the perspective of people in Salem's Polish community who take that view. We now turn to a discussion of the role that Salem Maritime NHS might play in the continued recollection and documentation of that body of experience.

## **The Park/Community Relationship**

This report has attempted to outline the history and sense of collective identity of Poles in Salem over time, particularly as related to the St. Joseph Society, St. Joseph Hall, and the network of groups and activities that the Hall and Society were a part of. But the report itself is just one piece of an ongoing project that invites future participation by people with connections to Salem's Polish community and by Salem Maritime NHS. As the foregoing chapters have shown, the Polish community in Salem has always been a changing entity. Questions about its group identity are nothing new—but they have arisen differently with each new generation. In its earliest days, in a very real sense “the

community” did not yet exist; it had to be created by people from very different regions and backgrounds, who often spoke quite different languages and dialects and sometimes had different hopes and expectations for their time in America. With the emergence of a second generation of American-born Poles, new debates arose about how to be Polish American, and by the third generation, with Polish American ethnicity a much less contested identity, the community needed to redefine itself in the face of changing patterns of work and residence—deindustrialization and suburbanization, respectively, as well as the presence of a new cohort of very different Polish immigrants with whom they shared the central community institution of the church.

Today, the third generation has assumed the role of senior members of Salem’s community, and new questions are in the air. What kinds of distance and closeness are emerging as a result of changing technologies and patterns of work and living? What sense of commonality exists among people who are connected by family to Polish Salem but who have no personal memories of parochial school, the old social clubs, or the days of Derby Street as Salem’s “Polish Main Street”? A key question that emerges for Salem Maritime NHS as the steward of St. Joseph Hall is, “How can the park be a responsible steward of this piece of the Polish community’s past while remaining responsive to the continued changes the community faces in the present and will inevitably face in the future?” While one goal of this project was to add to what is known about this specific site and ethnic community, we hope the study will also serve as a way to enhance the park’s existing relationship with people in Polish Salem and to create a space in which community memories and materials might continue to be collected and co-curated. This approach could make St. Joseph Hall a center for community history in a way that supports the park’s goal of serving the city that it is a part of. It could also extend the century-long history of the Hall as a space that contributes to the maintenance and continued self-definition of Polish Salem.

## **Recommendations**

We see five areas to which the park might devote attention:

- Strengthen direct connections with interested third-generation people while working with them to broaden the base of interest in St. Joseph Hall and Salem’s Polish history. This effort is already underway through the establishment of a community group, currently facilitated by Linda Moustakis. As with any

community relationship, this one will need to be fostered and maintained over time in order for the partnership between the park and community members to remain strong. Shared projects (for example, events, publications, websites, or exhibits) could be a way to expand the network of interested participants as well as adding new knowledge about Polish Salem over time. Members of the third generation could serve as connections with younger or farther-flung people with roots in Polish Salem, who may also care about the histories and memories associated with St. Joseph Hall and the Derby Street neighborhood.

- Make good use of digital technology to create “portals” through which people can collectively build on the existing community history. This ethnographic study has sought to identify and consolidate much of what is known about Poles in Salem, including the materials currently in the collection of Salem Maritime NHS. As noted above, though, there is much more exploration that could be done, and the advent of “Web 2.0” digital technology creates an exciting opportunity for participatory creation and sharing of knowledge, including with people—like the newer generations of Polish Americans with ties to Salem—who may be geographically distant from one another and from the city itself. This study has furnished the infrastructure of a web-based archive to be based on the Salem Maritime NHS website, building on the rudimentary existing space devoted to St. Joseph Hall and the Polish community. This web space could serve as a base for presenting information and images gathered during this study and previous ones, but we would hope to see the park work toward linking the site in some way to a more open site where others could contribute knowledge and “encounter” one another and the park. This more open web space could be a blog or wiki (multiply-authored sites that are relatively easy to contribute to) or some other technology chosen by interested participants.

Questions about hosting, access, control, the degree of editing or openness, long-term maintenance, and so forth remain to be worked out. However, we envision that there may be ways to accomplish this with a small-scale investment of resources and a flexible infrastructure that can allow for future directions and contributions to emerge if there is interest and commitment. For example, Salem Maritime NHS might use the web infrastructure we are presenting as part of this project to expand its own digital interpretation of

the St. Joseph Hall and the Polish neighborhood. Community members might establish a blog site and invite friends and family to contribute new material or thoughts about what is posted on the park's site. The park's website and the blog could be linked, so that there is easy access from one to the other. Over time, it might turn out that community members are posting materials and stories that are adding substantially to what the park already knows about the Hall and the neighborhood. This might prompt a new round of interviewing, the addition of new materials to the park's Polish archive, or an update of the park's web materials relating to the Polish community, as resources are available. The existing community group might take on the task of meeting with park staff once or twice a year to review what is happening in the online spaces and to consider how they might be updated or expanded. Such gatherings might be combined with some socializing at the Hall, open to the wider Polish community, creating an ongoing network of association around the building that helps to maintain and broaden existing connections.

- Make St. Joseph Hall as available as possible to interested community members for gatherings, meetings, and other activities. As a site with deep resonance for people in Polish Salem, St. Joseph Hall continues to serve as a touchstone for shared memory and could be an important future resource for community members. This may be particularly relevant if the decision is ever made to close the Polish church in Salem. An instructive example of a possible future role for the century-old St. Joseph Hall is the case of the Peabody parish, where parishioners responded in advance to the planned closing of St. Michael's Church by strengthening other organizations to maintain their network of ethnic community and social support. In any case, the continued availability of the Hall for events initiated and supported by Poles in Salem is an important component of any ongoing relationship between the park and this group of traditionally associated people.
- Ensure continuity and succession at the park so that relationships and projects around St. Joseph Hall do not depend on just one or two individuals. Recognizing that all community relationships are built on face to face, personal connections rather than existing merely in organizational charts, the park should be attentive to the question about how its collaboration with people from Salem's Polish

community can endure even when there are personnel changes over time. Comprehensive cataloging of the park's existing Polish collections and resources will help with this goal, so that both park staff and interested community members will be better able to build on these materials in the future.

- Establish connections with interested staff at the House of Seven Gables as a way to recognize and perhaps revitalize the important role played by the Gables in Polish neighborhood history over time. While the national park is a relative newcomer to its role in relation to Salem's Poles, the House of Seven Gables has participated in the creation of a sense of community among its Polish neighbors from early in the twentieth century. The Gables' archives contain unexplored materials relating to early Polish history in the city, and it is a key part of the story of how Poles settled in this neighborhood, encountered American culture and history, and fashioned their own sense of ethnic and local identity over time. Inviting interpretive staff from the Gables to be part of the ongoing construction and curation of knowledge about these processes could add a layer of depth to the exploration for all involved.

The park, by its stewardship of St. Joseph Hall, has become a part of the processes of memory and the construction of ethnic identity in the minds of those who have long-standing associations with the building and the area. But how can the park participate in the present-day sense of community in a way that goes beyond simple nostalgia for or documenting of a vanished past (something that community members themselves tend to reject)? The recommendations above are possible ways that the park might pursue that goal, and to extend the role of St. Joseph Hall as a meeting-place where people can share stories and knowledge. An expanded and dynamic partnership, extending into the realm of cyberspace, could serve as the impetus for both distant and face-to-face relationships and processes that can serve the collective memory of the community, the park, and the city they share.

## **Suggestions for Future Research**

As noted in Chapter One, this report represents an overview rather than a comprehensive ethnohistorical account of Poles in Salem, Massachusetts and their associations with St. Joseph Hall and the Derby Street neighborhood over time. There

are many directions that future research and community history projects might take, and these will depend on the people involved and the resources that they discover, collect, and create. In this concluding section, we will point to some of the gaps in existing knowledge as we encountered them in this study, which may serve as useful starting-points for other researchers.

- Translation of remaining St. Joseph Society record book

This is an essential source for understanding more fully how the St. Joseph Society changed over time. Further translation of the records should illuminate how the organization responded to the shifts in relationship between American Poles and the Polish state after World War I, as well as how it negotiated the changing role of mutual assistance associations into the early years of the Depression (the record appears to end in 1934). This data would help to show whether Salem's Poles and the St. Joseph Society reflected and/or differed from national trends in Polish America. It might also illuminate some of the changes made to the St. Joseph Hall over time, and how the decisions to make those changes related to what was happening within the organization, the neighborhood, and the community.

However, the language and writing in the record are apparently in an archaic form of Polish which makes translation laborious. The effort of translation may or may not add substantially more important data for the park to what is already known about the Hall and the Society. The most important benefit of working further with this document might be simply to understand more about its creation, so that it can be more fully assessed as a source of information. Anecdotal evidence from the Bartnicki family suggests that Teofil Bartnicki was indeed the author or transcriber of the records in the book, and a specialist in handwritten documents might be able to confirm whether it is in a single hand throughout.

In general, the later years of the St. Joseph Society's existence are very poorly documented, due to the deaths of important people active in the last years of the Society's active existence; our inability to make connections during this study with those who now run the successor society, the Society of St. Joseph; and the apparent loss of the great majority of Society records. Translating the earlier minutes of the Society would not help to bridge the gap between the 1930s



and the 1980s, but it would help to add to what is known overall about the group and the Hall.

- Exploration of residential occupancy in St. Joseph Hall

Research for this study did not discover a great deal of detail about occupancy of the residential spaces on the third floor of St. Joseph Hall by boarders and tenants. Detailed examination of census records and further interviewing of people with possible recollections of the apartments and their occupants would add to what is known about the Hall as a living space.

- Documentation/preservation of known historical records in the community

As noted at the outset, many of the collections of materials relevant to the history of Poles in Salem are to be found in individual homes and the offices of community organizations such as the church. These historical records are important resources for the history of Polish Salem and the city of Salem, but they are also an important aspect of the cultural history of the individuals and institutions that hold them and continue to create the historical record every day. Even cursory inventories and descriptions of such records and rudimentary conservation storage materials and standards will assist in preserving this historical record. Continued research among members of the community will no doubt identify further extant historical resources.

- Study of creation and demolition of the old Polish church/school complex

This study has outlined the history of the church/school complex on Herbert and Union Streets over time, but more detailed research could be done to determine the specific decisions and changes in ownership that took place in relation to the various buildings over the decades. The details of city maps (see Appendix H) suggest that the compound was created gradually over a number of decades. The property where the church was built was previously owned by the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company; what function did the building on the north side of that lot serve at NSCC before it was turned into a rectory and later a convent to serve the Polish clerics and teachers? Who were the architect and builders for the first St. John the Baptist church that occupied the southern side of the lot (shown as “not finished” in the 1907 map)? Who built and used the older church building cross the street, still shown as a “Catholic Church” in 1874,

and did it become property of the city at some point (as suggested by its being linked to the Lynde School by a passageway on the 1897 map)? It appears that this structure may already have had a multiethnic history before it became a school; as noted in Chapter 3, it seems to have been a Seaman's Bethel and then perhaps a French Canadian Catholic Church in the late nineteenth century. At what point was the Lynde School sold to St. John the Baptist parish? It is still shown as "City Kindergarten School" on the 1911 map; what negotiations may have taken place between the public and parochial educational systems over this site? Additional research on the shifting ownership of these properties in the early twentieth century could shed light on the relationships among the city's educational and industrial sectors as well as the various ethnic and religious communities who shared the Derby Street neighborhood.

- Interethnic encounters

Our interviews reveal that while the Derby Street neighborhood was strikingly self-contained for much of the twentieth century, residents clearly engaged in life outside of Polish Salem with varying communities of people. Even within the Derby Street neighborhood, significant numbers of Irish, Russian, French Canadian, Irish, and other neighbors shared the streets from the earliest years of Polish immigration, as well as encountering one another at the House of Seven Gables and elsewhere. Inter-marriage among the French Canadian and Polish communities, in particular, is well-documented in our interviews and other materials. Many Jewish residents, including those from the partitioned areas of Poland and the surrounding region, were also an important part of the ethnic and religious mix. Further study of the relationships among various immigrant groups might help us better understand the processes of cultural change and the social relations in this urban neighborhood.

- More detailed histories of other Polish clubs and organizations

This study found little documented evidence about the Polish National Alliance chapters in the city, the St. John's Society and Group 555, known as the Three Nickels Club and also as the "Sons of Poland" lodge (see Appendix F). Research done for this study suggests that there is a more complex history to be discovered about these two (or possibly three) organizations. More detailed documentation of how they developed, perhaps merged with other groups over

time, and eventually disbanded would give a more complete picture of ethnic and community politics in Polish Salem and how this local community fit within the broader Polish American world of which it was a part.

- Study of historic preservation efforts within the Derby Street neighborhood

Another gap in what we were able to cover in this study is the period of the 1960s and 1970s in the Derby Street neighborhood, when historic preservation began to be seen as a potentially positive strategy for maintaining the built environment of the area. More information from people involved in preservation efforts would help to situate the Derby Street neighborhood within larger histories of backlash against urban renewal, state-supported preservation projects, and private development in historic districts, trends which have shaped this and other urban neighborhoods to a very great extent. Additional oral history interviewing and research in newspapers and materials relating to the development of historic districts would fill the gaps in what is known about this period in the neighborhood.

- Investigation into the renaming of Kosciusko Street in 1918

At some point in 1918, Grant Street (formerly Tucker's Wharf), the short street running from St. Joseph Hall down to the waterfront, was renamed Kosciusko Street. Given the tense politics around questions of Polish loyalty and patriotism during World War I, this event suggests that Poles and others in Salem may have been seeking to make some kind of public statement about where the immigrants stood in relation to the war effort. Further research into this name change—for example, who initiated it? were particular organizations involved? what was the city's role?—could illuminate much about the early politics of Polish Salem. Little seems to remain in collective memory about the name change, and careful combing of the local newspaper would likely be required to determine its date and to begin to discover more about what it meant for Poles, the city, and the local and transnational war efforts.

- Exploration of historic interpretation at the House of Seven Gables

Chapter six begins to explore how the House of Seven Gables presented American history and how it integrated the culture and history of the city's immigrant groups into its programming. More data on the Gables' approach to

interpreting the past would help to situate its assimilationist and social service projects within the broader context of how the past has been used in America, as both a tool to create unity and a way to incorporate new groups and perspectives. For example, the Gables sponsored historical pageants in 1913, 1920, and perhaps other years, as well as presenting a float in the 1926 celebration of the Salem's tercentenary. The 1913 pageant offered a narration of Salem's history from native settlement at Naumkeag to the present, incorporating the city's newer citizens into that version of the community's history. More information about that and similar productions could give us a clearer picture of how the new Polish immigrants interacted with the new settlement house and how they collaborated on a jointly-created sense of what it meant to be an American in this place and period.<sup>12</sup> It would also be useful to consider more thoroughly the Gables' interpretation of history and immigrants' place in Salem's own history in relation to other public interpretations of the past, such as the Massachusetts Tercentenary. The archives of the House of Seven Gables contain a great deal of additional information that could be mined on these and other related topics, and

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<sup>12</sup> The 1913 pageant took place over four days in June, and involved over 1000 participants including an orchestra and choir of 150. This extravaganza involved old Salem families such as the Putnams and Pickerings, as well as more recent arrivals from Poland and the Ukraine. Classes from the House of Seven Gables also participated. Like other early twentieth century pageants, Salem's 1913 pageant engaged the city's oldest families, the keepers of history, as well as the social reformers and their constituencies. Like other historical pageants, the Pageant of 1913 saw history as a march of progress and viewed the present as an improvement over the past, casting an eye towards an idealized future. Art, Science, Industry and Progress stood for contemporary Salem, followed in line by groups of children—French, Italian, Greek and Polish—representing the population of 1913. The pageant presented immigrants in a positive light, promoting tolerance in comparison to the bigotry of the past; there was no ethnic or class conflict here, for this was a melting pot where all groups could come together peacefully in common good. On the 1913 pageant, see; "The Salem Pageant is A Gorgeous Spectacle; First Performance Fine: [June 14, 1913], newspaper article, Emmerton Genealogy Folder, Caroline Emmerton Files, Box 19B, House of Seven Gables Archives; transcript of *Monitor* article, April 1, 1942, Emmerton Genealogy folder, Caroline Emmerton Files, Box 19B, House of Seven Gables Archives; David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 63-65, 112, 122; Lorinda Goodwin, "Salem's House of the Seven Gables as Historic Site," in *Salem: Place, Myth, and Memory*, Dane Anthony Morrison, Nancy Lusignan Schultz, eds. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 300; Christopher White, "Salem as Religious Proving Ground," in *Salem: Place, Myth, and Memory*, Dane Anthony Morrison, Nancy Lusignan Schultz, eds. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 53.

they represent a potentially very useful source for future research on Poles in the Derby Street neighborhood and how they created a place for themselves within the urban fabric of Salem over time.

- Study of the leather industry in the Derby Street neighborhood

Our research has revealed the significance of the local leather industries in the occupational lives of the Polish and Polish American community in Salem. We know that many small shops devoted to the various leather trades, including shoe production and leather machine shops, existed within the neighborhood and employed many local residents. Scholarship on the leather industries in the North Shore area has focused primarily on the nineteenth century and the important labor struggles of workers in the shoe trades, and most of this research considers other towns such as Lynn and Peabody. Moreover, the work that has been done in Salem addresses the leather industry based around Blubber Hollow, rooted in the establishment of tanneries going back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There has been no work done on the post-fire industry, and the small but numerous shops located in the Derby Street area remain something of a mystery. A more detailed study of atlases and city directories will help establish the locations and tenures of such local businesses, as a first step in understanding who owned the shops, how many people they employed, start and end dates for their presence in the neighborhood, and so on.<sup>13</sup>

- Study of Polish and Polish American workers at Parker Brothers

We encountered several oblique references to the Parker Brothers Company as an employer of many Polish and Polish American workers in Salem. However, our attempts to follow up these references were not productive. Further research to determine the nature of Parker Brothers' workforce, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century, might be fruitful.

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<sup>13</sup> In interviews for this study, we identified Herman Tyburc as one Polish owner in this sector of the city's industrial economy. Dorothy Stupakiewicz's grandfather and his brothers also owned a small factory in the Derby Street neighborhood until the Depression.

## AFTERWORD

I grew up on Bentley Street, Salem, in the family home we shared with my aunt and three uncles, from the age of four until my teens. This area that we lived in was almost entirely made up of Polish families. It started on Webb Street and included almost every street up to Union Street. It was bordered by Derby Street and Essex Street. It was a block of streets with a few tentacles of Polish families reaching across Essex Street into Forrester Street near the Salem Common and ending on Bridge Street, somehow snaking its way into side streets that ran off of Bridge Street and Collins Street, but the heart of the Polish community was really where we lived. We were smack in the middle and I would say that just about every house on Bentley Street was occupied by Polish families with a smattering of Irish, Russian, French, Jewish and Black families entwined within our neighborhood. It was a rich tapestry. Essex Street ran parallel to Bentley Street at the bottom and Derby Street ran parallel at the top.

Ah, Derby Street, the center of the whole Polish neighborhood. Meat markets, grocery stores, Groman's Variety Store, Grabas the Caterer, Gables Drug Store, Enos Cafe, and many Polish Social Clubs. St. Joseph's, St. Johns, the Falcon's Hall, the Three Nickels and also the Russian and Ukranian Clubs. St. John the Baptist Parochial School and St. John the Baptist Polish Church were established and it seemed the circle was complete.

Nestled in this neighborhood was the House of the Seven Gables that became the focus of the fabric of this Polish community that seemed to blend right in and introduced many families to different experiences including arts, crafts, dancing and the history of another earlier era of Nathaniel Hawthorne and the deeper history of Salem. I, for one, learned to love the magic of this historic house that seemed to make me and others feel that it belonged to them.

Polish people have a fierce pride of their heritage. They are independent, proud and somewhat stubborn or should I say persistent. It is this combination that ensured their survival and made them successful, but they are also generous, social and fun-loving and this perhaps sealed its mark.

Traditions brought over from their homeland, *Wigilia*, the Christmas Eve Vigil with its special dishes, Easter and the blessing of the food, Polka music and dancing, May processions to the Church and their strong ties to the church, the special foods, *Babka*,

*Kielbasa, Pierogi, Golabki* (bread, sausage, dumplings, stuffed cabbage) and many more were part of the diet.

I share these memories mostly through a child's and young adolescent's viewpoint but the magic of this neighborhood has never gone away. Everyone knew each other and in some ways the feeling was of family, a way of life that was safe and predictable and familiar and exists no more, except in memory, frozen in time and seen through the eyes of a child. I have always carried it with me in my sojourn through life. I have moved many times but I have never moved from here. It is fitting that I have come full circle, back to my family home. Somehow, I always knew I would return. When I left, I looked back only briefly and then I moved forward but I am back here. I am home.

The neighborhood has changed but I will always embrace the memories of the place where I and others were molded and formed and thrived in the loving security of feeling safe and secure and belonging. To quote the Polish national anthem: "Poland will never be lost as long as I live."

Linda Moustakis

December 2009

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\*NOTE: Because historians' convention of footnoting rather than using in-text citations is more suited to much of the material cited in this report, particularly from unpublished sources, we have used that style ("Chicago style") in the body of the report. The annotated bibliography, however, follows anthropological convention ("AAA style"). The bibliography is annotated selectively; annotations focus on sources that were particularly relevant to the study or that may be most helpful for future research.



- Beito, David T., et al. 2002. *The Voluntary City: Choice, Community, and Civil Society*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Blejwas, Stanislaus A. 1999. “‘To Sing Out the Future of Our Beloved Fatherland’: Choral Nationalism and The Polish Singers Alliance of America, 1889-1939.” *Journal of Ethnic History* 19:1 (Fall). Explores the intersection of music, politics, and ethnic identity as negotiated through a national association of Polish choirs. Focuses particularly on the ideological role of musical organizations, and how this shifted from the period before World War I (when Poles in the Diaspora used cultural expression largely to create and preserve their visions of a threatened Fatherland) to the interwar period (when the reinstated Polish nation sought to use immigrants as extensions of its own policy and economic goals) and then to the changing political landscapes of World War II, the Cold War, and the post-Soviet era. Extremely useful in showing the relationship and tensions between the homeland and the diaspora.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2002. “American Polonia and the School Strike in Wrzesnia.” *Polish American Studies* Vol. 59, No. 1 (Spring 2002), 9-59. Detailed exploration of the “Wrzesnia affair” of 1901-1904, in which American Poles participated in an international campaign of solidarity with those resisting the imposition of the German language in formerly Polish-language schools in the German-controlled areas of Poland. Includes the full text of a resolution adopted by Salem Poles in support of the strikers in 1902.
- Booth, Robert. 2004. “Salem as Enterprise Zone, 1783-1786” In *Salem: Place, Myth, and Memory*. Dane Anthony Morrison, Nancy Lusignan Schultz, eds. Pp. 63-89. Boston: Northeastern University Press. General social, economic and cultural history of Salem after the Revolution; development as a cosmopolitan city.
- Borkowski, Elizabeth. 1974. “One Hundred Fifteen Years in Salem.” In “Graduate Immigration Seminar: A Bicentennial Study. Immigration in American Life: Graduate Seminar Research Papers on North Shore Selected Topics,” Vol. 1. Salem State College. Adele Younis, ed. Detailed history of the early years of Poles in Salem, formation of churches and social clubs, cultural life, politics, etc., by a Salem State College graduate student in a mid-1970s seminar project. Based largely on interviews with named community members.

- Boston Mat Leather Company. 1918. Photographs. Collection of historical photographs of workers at the Boston Mat Leather Company, 34 Walnut St., Peabody, Mass.
- Brzozowska-Krajka, Anna. 2006. "Coexistence or Conflict? The Problem of Dual Belief in Polish Folklore." In *Journal of the Slavic and East European Folklore Association*, Vol. XI, 16-27. online here. Shows how Polish folk belief intersects with Polish Catholic faith in largely complementary ways.
- Bukowczyk, John J. 1987. *And My Children Did Not Know Me: A History of the Polish-Americans*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Extremely good overview of the background and development of "Polonia" over time. Discusses immigrant politics in relation to the homeland, cultural production, questions of unity and conflict within Polish-American communities, and changing conceptions of Polish-American identity over time. Particularly good on ethnic revival politics and the links between ethnic revivalism and large-scale economic and political shifts in the U.S.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1996. *Polish Americans and their History: Community, Culture, and Politics*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. Survey of existing scholarly literature on Polish American history (for example in the areas of labor, religion, and emigration) along with some new explorations of under-examined topics such as Jewish emigration from Poland. Representative of good scholarship in the field up to the 1990s.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1998. "'Who is the Nation?'—or, 'Did Cleopatra Have Red Hair?': A Patriotic Discourse on Diversity, Nationality, and Race." *MELUS* 23:4 (Winter) A meditation on ethnic consciousness in relation to a racialized sense of the American polity, using Polish-Americans as a case study.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1998. "The Image and Self-Image of Polish Americans," *Polish American Studies* 55:2 (Autumn 1998): 63-71.
- Campbell, Dan. 1978. "The Industrial and Social Development of Boston Street, Salem," unpublished paper by CETA Team Project, Historic Salem, Inc., June 6, 1978. Jim McAllister's files.
- Carberg, Edward. 1986. "The Sanborn Estate and the St. Joseph's Society Building." In Carden, Marie. 1998 (1989). *St. Joseph Hall Historic Structure Report*, Salem Maritime National Historic Site, pp. 185-196.

- . [1998?] "Rediscovering Salem Polonia" and "Salem Polonia Cultural/Historical Sites Walking Tour." Unpublished papers.
- Carden, Marie. 1998 (1989). *St. Joseph Hall Historic Structure Report*, Salem Maritime National Historic Site. Architectural report on the Hall, with a small amount of social history included; not all of this, however, is accurate, and should be checked against other sources.
- Carroll, Thomas. *History of the Leather Industry in Salem and Danvers, Mass. Supplement to Hide and Leather*. n.d.[1902] Histories of leather industries in Salem and Danvers mainly focused around the shops that were established and the men who began the businesses. No mention of workers. A bit on the strike of 1886, sympathetic to owners. Sees strike as first blow to dominance of Salem in leather trade.
- Carson, Mina. 1990. *Settlement Folk: Social Thought and the American Settlement Movement, 1885-1930*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Chase-Harrell, Pauline, Carol Ely and Stanley Moss. 1993. "Administrative History of the Salem Maritime National Historic Site." Prepared for the National Park Service North Atlantic Regional Office by Boston Affiliates, Inc. Boston: Boston Affiliates, Inc. Excellent administrative history of Salem Maritime National Historic Site, particularly useful for the establishment of the Park in the 1930s and the work of Edwin Small; NPS work with local organizations, especially in the Park's early decades; preservation and restoration vs. demolition issues; history of Salem Maritime NHS administration in context of the overall NPS mission and history. Offers important background material for understanding the role of the Park in interpreting Salem's history and its presence and impact on the neighborhood.
- Chomsky, Aviva. 2004. "Salem as a Global City, 1850-2004." In *Salem: Place, Myth, and Memory*. Dane Anthony Morrison and Nancy Lusignan Schultz, eds. Pp. 219-47. Boston: Northeastern University Press. Useful industrial history of Salem in the 20th century, includes discussions of the leather industry, Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company, Sylvania, Parker Brothers, labor organizing and strikes. Focuses on deindustrialization in Salem, beginning with the departure of the shoe and leather industries after the Fire of 1914.

- \_\_\_\_\_. 2008. *Linked Labor Histories: New England, Columbia and the Making of a Global Working Class*. Duke University Press. Chapter on the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company and their program of labor-management collaboration in the 1920s and 1930s; strike at Naumkeag in 1933 and labor issues there.
- Clark, Francis E. 1913. *Old Homes of New Americans: The Country and the People of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and Their Contribution to the New World*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Cooley, Timothy J. 2005. *Making Music in the Polish Tatras : Tourists, Ethnographers, and Mountain Musicians*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Cox, Frank L. "Experiment in Union-Management Cooperation at the Pequot Mills." Typescript of ca. 1939 on file at the Essex Institute.
- Cultrera, Bob and John Stanton, et al. 1991. *Leather Soul* [videorecording] New York: Picture Business Productions.
- Cygan, Mary. 1998. "Inventing Polonia: Notions of Polish American identity, 1870-1990." Prospects 23. Traces changes in the concept of Polishness in the U.S. from the start of mass migration through third and fourth generation Polish Americans. An extremely useful and lucid discussion that looks at homeland/diaspora relationships, various cultural forms (theater, journalism, music, etc.), and the different strategic ways that Polish American identity was mobilized by different elements of the community over time.
- Daniels, Roger. 1990. *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*. New York: Columbia University. Daniels offers a useful general history of Polish immigration to and settlement in America and a discussion of the importance of Polish ethnic organizations in the US.
- Davis, Allen. 1967. *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914*. New York: Oxford.
- Dewey, John. 1918. "Conditions among the Poles in the United States." Washington, DC: Military Intelligence Bureau. Report of Dewey's military-intelligence-commissioned investigation into the extent of American loyalty and pro-German feeling among American Poles during World War I. Lucid discussion of how ethnic politics mirrored Old World histories and conflicts, and how Poles had learned to compromise in flexible ways in pursuit of some degree of self-determination.

- Dick, Rudolph C. 1951. *Nathaniel Griffen (1796-1876) of Salem--and his Naumkeag steam Cotton Company*. New York: The Newccomen Society in North America.
- Donnell, Robert P. 1976. "Locational Response to Catastrophe: The Shoe and Leather Industry of Salem, Massachusetts, After the Conflagration of June 25, 1914," Syracuse University Department of Geography Discussion Paper Series, No. 20, July 1976. Examines Fire of 1914's effect on three major industrial areas of Salem and traces relocation patterns of damaged shoe and leather factories.
- Dunn, Tim. "Naumkeag Steam Factory." Typescript dated 25 March 1981 at the Salem Planning Department.
- Emmerton, Caroline. 1935. *The Chronicles of Three Old Houses*. Boston: Thomas Todd Co. Chronicles the history, acquisition, restoration and alteration and use of the House of Seven Gables, Hathaway House, and Retire Beckett House.
- Erdmans, Mary. 1994. "Recent Political Action on Behalf of Poland: The Interrelationships among Polonia's Cohorts 1978-1990." In *Polish Americans*. Helen Z. Lopata, ed. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1998. *Opposite Poles: Immigrants and Ethnics in Polish Chicago, 1976-1990*. Ohio University. Erdmans examines the overlaps and areas of friction between assimilated Polish American communities and much more recent arrivals from Soviet-era Poland, focusing particularly on differences of social class and political experience.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2004. *The Grasiński Girls: The Choices They Had and the Choices They Made*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press. A sociological memoir exploring gender, class, and ethnicity in a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Polish American family (the author's own). Explores the paradoxes of Polish women's lives in this period, when they "rejected *both* the negative patriarchal definitions of women and the feminist devaluations of the choices they made" (17).
- Flynn, John. [1945?] *John Flynn and Sons, Inc. Salem, MA*. Privately printed. Published on 25th anniversary of John Flynn and Sons, Inc., which began leather business in 1920 at 80 Boston Street, or "Blubber Hollow" in Salem, Mass. Documents early beginnings of the company. Uses photographs and some description, but mainly photos, to go through the leather production process. Emphasizes importance of loyalty to success of company. Many photos of workers.

- Foss-Mollan, Kate. 1999. "Waiting for water: service discrimination and Polish neighborhoods in Milwaukee, 1870-1910." *Michigan Historical Review* 25:2 (Fall).
- Fox, Paul. 1970 (1922). *The Poles in America*. New York: George Doran Co. Survey work by Presbyterian pastor of Polish descent, part of a series on immigrants undertaken under auspices of Interchurch World Movement, seemingly to counter anti-immigrant feeling of the period. Aims to be "sympathetic but critical" to "new Americans." Gives general overview of Polish history, Polish immigration to the U.S., and patterns of work, life, religion, etc. in Polish American communities.
- Friedlander, Amy. 1991. "Salem Maritime National Historic Site, Historical Research 1626-1990." New Jersey: Cultural Resource Group. Crucial resource that offers results of research done in primary sources documenting Derby Street properties, their ownership and use, with valuable focus on the shifting demographics and social histories of the neighborhood. Includes many photographs documenting the transformation of the area.
- Galush, William. 2006. "The Unremembered Movement: Abstinence among Polish Americans." *Polish American Studies* Vol. 58, No. 2 (August 2006), 13-22. A short but well-sourced article tracing the roots of temperance and abstinence efforts in Poland and Polonia and their relationship to the American temperance movement.
- Gambale, Graziella. 1995. "A Study of Immigrants in Salem." Unpublished paper, Merrimack College. Draws on Salem city directories, the Massachusetts Historical Commission Reconnaissance study, and Salem NHS historian John Frayler's research on immigrants in Salem. Includes some useful new details about various clubs and organizations in Salem, but in general, the material is already covered elsewhere.
- Gerstle, Gary. 1989. *Working Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2001. *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Gillespie, Charles Bancroft. 1897. *Illustrated History of Salem*. Salem: Salem Evening News. Industries.

- Glassberg, David. 1990. *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press. An important source on how the pageant movement reflected by assimilationist and reforming impulses in both compatible and incompatible ways.
- Goodwin, Lorinda B.R. 2004. "Salem's House of the Seven Gables as Historic Site." In *Salem: Place, Myth, and Memory*. Dane Anthony Morrison, Nancy Lusignan Schultz, eds. Pp. 299-313. Boston: Northeastern University Press. This article offers a useful chronology of the House of Seven Gables site.
- Goss, K. David, Richard Trask, Bryant Tolles, Jr., Joseph Flibbert, and Jim McAllister. 1999. *Salem: Cornerstones of a Historic City*. Beverly, Mass.: Commonwealth Editions.
- Goss, K. David. 1999. "The Maritime History of Salem." In *Salem: Cornerstones of a Historic City*. In Goss et al., eds. Pp. 5-33. Beverly, Mass.: Commonwealth Editions.
- Grady, Anne. 2005. "National Historic Landmark Nomination, House of the Seven Gables Historic District." National Park Service. Detailed architectural analysis and some social history of the buildings in the House of Seven Gables complex and their histories. Very important account and chronology of the creation of the entire site, building histories and movement of buildings.
- Gray, Thalia. 2004. "Polish Americans in Salem: A Transition in Photographs." In *Pickled Fish and Salted Provisions* (SAMA newsletter). VI:4 (March 2004). Electronic document. <http://www.nps.gov/sama/historyculture/upload/Vol5no3window.pdf>.
- Greene, Victor. 1975. *For God and Country: The Rise of Polish and Lithuanian Ethnic Consciousness in America, 1860-1910*. Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Madison. A product of the "new ethnic studies" of the 1970s, this book argues that Poles' and Lithuanians' sense of themselves as ethnically distinct peoples emerged from the internal struggles between clericalists and nationalists over whether the immigrants' primary loyalties were to the Catholic Church or their subjugated national homelands. In an account that emphasizes Polish American history much more than Lithuanian, Greene shows how the opposed sides constructed an identity that reconciled the tensions between being a Catholic and being Polish, a development which he dates in large part to the ordination of the first Polish American bishop in 1908.

- Gunn, Selskar M. and Samuel Schmidt. [n.d?]. *An Investigation of Housing Conditions in Salem, Mass. Report to the Housing Committee of the Associated Charities and to the Committee on Nuisances of the Civic League*. Available online at: <http://pds.lib.harvard.edu/pds/view/2577559?n=2&s=4>
- Halsey, R.T.H. and Elizabeth Tower. 1925. *The Homes of Our Ancestors as Shown in the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York*. New York: Doubleday, Page & Company. Published upon opening of the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum in 1925; statement about importance of American decorative arts and the colonial revival.
- Hartford, William. 1996. *Where Is Our Responsibility: Unions and Economic Change in the New England Textile Industry, 1870-1960*. Amherst: University of Mass. Press. Focuses on New Bedford, Fall River and Lawrence.
- Hide and Leather. 1905. *Hide and Leather: Peabody Supplement*. Chicago: Hide and Leather Pub. Co. Overview of the Peabody leather industry with photos of corporations in business around 1905.
- Hunter, Floyd, Ruth Connor Schaffer, and Cecil Ships. 1956. *Community Organization: Action and Inaction*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. See especially chapter 4. Sociological study of a community in Salem, Massachusetts, conducted in 1952. Chapter 1 gives overview of social context of the city of Salem. Chapter 4 focuses on the Polish community.
- Jackson, David J. 2003. "Just another day in a new Polonia: contemporary Polish-American polka music." *Popular Music and Society* 26:4 (December). Examines how popular music reflects political formations and beliefs, and concludes that "Every significant issue that has confronted the Polish-American community has, literally, been played out in polka music," from issues of loyalty and patriotism to discrimination and unionism.
- Jacobson, Matthew Frye. 1999. *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.



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- Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, Anna D. 2004. *The Exile Mission : The Polish Political Diaspora and Polish Americans, 1939-1956.* Athens : Ohio University Press. Explores the effects of World War II on people within the Polish Diaspora, sense of Polish community in Displaced Persons camps, resettlement in the U.S., debates among Polish Americans and refugees over history, class, ethnic identity ("immigrants" vs. "refugees," "Old Polonia" vs. "New Emigration"), links with the homeland, the politics of government in exile.
- Jarvis, Clive. 1929. *The Story of Pequot.* Salem: Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company. Details the production process for Pequot sheeting and products. Focus on machines, not people. Includes engraving of the Naumkeag mill plant. Presents Naumkeag Mills that as a company that saved Salem after it lost its dominance in shipping. Includes two samples: bleached and unbleached Pequot sheeting.
- Jones, Arthur Barnett. 1914. *The Salem Fire.* Boston: Gorham Press. An eye-witness account by a Salem fireman. Includes many photos of the fire scenes and aftermath. Available as a public domain document via Googlebooks.
- Journal of Ethnic History.* 1996. Special Issue: The Poles in America. (Fall)
- Juravic, Tom, William F. Hartford, and James R. Green. 1996. *Commonwealth of Toil: Chapters in the History of Massachusetts Workers and their Unions.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Kammen, Michael. 1991. *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture.* New York: Knopf.
- Kmiec, Stas. 2004. "More 'Ethnic Cleansing' of Polish Parishes." *Polish American Journal* (September 2004). Accessed online at [http://www.polishheritageproject.com/SYH/ethnic\\_cleansing.htm](http://www.polishheritageproject.com/SYH/ethnic_cleansing.htm).

- Knab, Sophie Hodorowicz. 1996. *Polish Customs, Traditions and Folklore*. Hippocrene Books.
- Kubiak, Hieronim. 1982. *The Polish National Catholic Church in the United States of America from 1897 to 1980 : Its Social Conditioning and Social Functions*. Kraków : Nakł. Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawn. Nauk.
- Kuniczak, W.S. 1978. *My Name is Million: An Illustrated History of the Poles in America*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday. General, well-illustrated, celebratory history of Poles in America.
- Kruszka, Wacław. 1998(1905-1908). *A History of the Poles in America to 1908*. 4 vols. Washington, DC: Catholic University Press. Monumental study by a Polish priest who gathered data from his colleagues. Vol. 1 is a general history of Polish immigration to America before 1908. The remaining volumes look at Polish immigration and history in the U.S. through the lens of Polish parishes across the country. Vol. III focuses on Poles in the eastern and southern states. The chapter on “The Poles in New England” uses data about Polish parishes in the New England states to trace the settlement and dispersal of Poles in the region.
- Lindgren, James M. 1995. *Preserving Historic New England: Preservation, Progressivism, and the Remaking of Memory*. New York: Oxford. The history of historic preservation in New England, with a focus on the progressive era and values which informed the work of preservationists and reformers like those in Salem.
- Lopata, Helena Znaniecka. 1994. *Polish Americans*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers. Based on Lopata’s 1976 work of the same name, and reflecting to some extent older preoccupations with conflict and unity in American ethnic communities. Lopata’s central contention is that Polish Americans have been deeply concerned with status and competition among themselves, but that paradoxically, this has actually created community cohesion and dynamism rather than splintering Polish Americans as a group. One of the most useful aspects of the book is an additional chapter by Mary Patrice Erdmans on the most recent cohort of “New Poles” and the relationship between the Solidarity-era and post-Communist migrants and assimilated Polish Americans, a situation very much reflected in Salem’s Polish parish at present.

- Lukowski, Jerzy, and Hubert Zawadski. 2006 (2001). *A Concise History of Poland*. 2nd edition. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Probably the best available concise English-language version of Poland's highly complex political history. Starts from the helpful assumption that "The nation-state is not yet dead, but, if it were, a reading of Poland's history might be much facilitated," (xix) reflecting the almost continual changes in Poland's borders and governance over many centuries. The series of clearly-drawn maps is particularly helpful in grasping these changes. Social history is virtually absent here, however.
- Lynch, Francis. n.d. *50 Years in Blubber Hollow With Salem Oil and Grease Co. Salem, MA*. Retrospective on the Salem Oil and Grease Co and its half century history. Details the company's specific role in the leather tanning industry. This publication includes some information on early tanning in Salem.
- Magda, Matthew S. 1992. *The Polish Presence in Pennsylvania*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania Historical Association.
- Mahler, Sarah J. 1995. *American Dreaming: Immigrant Life on the Margins*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Majewski, Karen. 2003. *Traitors and true Poles : Narrating a Polish-American Identity, 1880-1939*. Athens : Ohio University Press.
- Marshall, Bridget M. 2004. "Salem's Ghosts and the Cultural Capital of Witches." In *Spectral America: Phantoms and the National Imagination*. Jeffrey A. Weinstock, ed. Pp. 244-264. Madison: University of Wisconsin.
- Massachusetts Commission on Immigration, 1913. *Report of the Massachusetts Commission on Immigration*. This commission was appointed by the Governor to investigate the status and condition of immigrants in Massachusetts. It considers the distribution, occupations, educational opportunities, businesses, way of life, social and economic conditions of immigrants in the Commonwealth; it includes information on federal laws and agencies that influence immigrants. This was a state-wide study, completed in 1913.

- Massachusetts Historical Commission, Secretary of State's Office. 1985. "MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report: Salem." The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) produced this report on the historical development of Salem in 1985, as part of an effort to identify and document the history and historic resources of each town in the Commonwealth. The Salem report may be accessed online at [www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcpdf/townreports/Essex/sal.pdf](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcpdf/townreports/Essex/sal.pdf) or by going to [www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc) and clicking on "Other Publications," Downloadable Town Reconnaissance Survey Reports, Salem.
- McAllister, Jim. 1999. "Salem Then and Now." In *Salem: Cornerstones of a Historic City*. David K. Goss, Richard Trask, Bryant Tolles, Jr., Joseph Flibbert, and Jim McAlister, eds. Pp. 105-131. Beverly, Mass.: Commonwealth Editions. This article provides a useful summary of the cultural and social history of Salem from 1800 to the present--particularly on topics of immigration, the preservation movement, redevelopment, and witchcraft and Salem's identity in the 20th and 21st centuries.
- McAllister, Jim and Historic Salem, Inc. n.d. "A Brief History of Historic Salem, Inc." Accessed on July 25, 2008 at [www.historicsalem.org/about/history/roots.html](http://www.historicsalem.org/about/history/roots.html).
- McGregor, Amanda. 2007. "Friends reconnect in remembrance of Polish parish." Salem News (August 13, 2007). Accessed online at [http://www.salemnews.com/permalink/local\\_story\\_225120202](http://www.salemnews.com/permalink/local_story_225120202).
- McKenzie, Matthew G. 2004. "Salem as Athanaeum." In *Salem: Place, Myth, and Memory*. Dane Anthony Morrison, Nancy Lusignan Schultz, eds. Pp. 91-105. Boston: Northeastern University Press. Examines the kinds of environmental and other knowledge created among early nineteenth-century merchants of the East India Marine Society and other Salem organizations.
- Merry, Sally Engle. 1990. *Getting Justice and Getting Even: Legal Consciousness Among Working-Class Americans*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Migrant Echo*. San Francisco: Society of Christ for Polish Immigrants. Bilingual journal focusing on Christianity, community among Polish Americans, cultural expression, assimilation. University of Massachusetts/Amherst has issues from 1972-1981.

- Mocha, Frank, ed. 1998. *American "Polonia" and Poland*. Boulder, CO: East European Monographs. Study of Polish/Polonian relationship by a scholar and participant in many Polish organizations, notably the Polish American Congress. Somewhat gossipy in tone, with a strong and culturally-conservative agenda. Incorporates various documents and materials in a rather uneven and unsynthesized way.
- Morawska, Ewa T. 1977. *The Maintenance of Ethnicity: Case Study of the Polish-American Community in Greater Boston*. San Francisco : R & E Research Associates.
- Morrison, Dane Anthony, and Nancy Lusignan Schultz. 2004. *Salem: Place, Myth, and Memory*. Boston: Northeastern University Press. An "alternative guide book to Salem" (xiv) that explores many layers of place- and meaning-making in the city from the colonial period to the present. A solid scholarly work that also speaks to a more general readership and to students of American Studies.
- Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company. 1949. *The Pequot Story*. Salem: Naumkeag Steam Cotton Co. This company publication tells the story of cotton manufacturing at the Pequot mills, and includes photographs of the machines and work processes. The focus is on machinery and efficiency.
- Nyman, R.C. and Elliott D. Smith. 1934 *Union Management Cooperation in the Stretch-Out: Labor Extension at the Pequot Mills*. New Haven: Institute of Human Relations, Yale University Press. This study of the management--union agreement at the Pequot Mills in the 1920s provides valuable information about the agreement, the stretch-outs, organized labor, and the strike of 1933. It must be considered with caution, however, as it is very pro-management.
- Obidinski, Eugene E. and Helen Stankiewicz Zand. 1987. *Polish Folkways in America: Community and Family*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America. Framed by two scholarly articles on ethnicity by sociologist Obidinski, this book is a compilation of articles by folklorist Zand written between the 1930s and the 1960s. The chapters, on everything from assimilation to birth, wedding, and death customs to gender roles, are richly detailed but somewhat idiosyncratic, in that they were based on highly personal recollections from a self-selected group who responded to Zand's written request for surveys.
- Orbanes, Phillip. 2003. *The Game Makers: The Story of Parker Brothers from Tiddledy Winks to Trivial Pursuit*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press.

- Osgood, Charles and H.M. Batchelder. 1879. *Historical Sketch of Salem, 1839-1877*.
- Pacyga, Dominic. 1989. "The Russell Square Community Committee." *Journal of Ethnic History* 15:2.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1996. "To Live Amongst Others: Poles and Their Neighbors in Industrial Chicago, 1865-1930." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16:1 (Fall).
- Peiss, Kathy. 1986. *Cheap Amusements: Working Woman and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Important chapters regarding popular recreation such as dance halls and popular theater and the working class, with discussions of reform efforts.
- Pienkos, Angela T. 1978. *Ethnic Politics in Urban America: The Polish Experience in Four Cities*. Chicago: Polish American Historical Association. Comprises four articles about Polish-Americans in Buffalo, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Chicago, with general information and figures on all four cities.
- Pienkos, Donald E. 1984. *PNA: A Centennial History of the Polish National Alliance of the United States of America*. Boulder, CO: East European Monographs. Similar to Pienkos' centennial history of the Falcons. Includes a good overview of the Polish fraternal movement and an even-handed discussion of the political factions and tensions within one of the oldest and largest of the Polish fraternals.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1987. *One Hundred Years Young: A History of the Polish Falcons in America, 1887-1987*. Boulder, CO: East European Monographs. Chronicles the history of this important Polish fraternal organization, which emphasized sports and physical fitness for young people along with militant support for an independent Poland. Salem's "nest" of Falcons was founded in 1910.
- Polish Legion of American Veterans (PLAV). 2007. "PLAV History." Accessed online <http://www.plav.org/plavhist.htm>.
- Praszalowicz, Dorota. 1994. "The Cultural Changes of Polish-American Parochial Schools in Milwaukee, 1866-1988." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 13:4 (Summer).
- Pula, James S. 1995. *Polish Americans: An Ethnic Community*. New York: Twayne Publishers. A brief but comprehensive study of Polish Americans over time, focusing on the standard topics of homeland vs. diaspora politics, assimilation vs. cultural conservation efforts, and generational shifts within Polonia.

- \_\_\_\_\_. 1996. "Image, Status, Mobility and Integration in American Society: The Polish Experience." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16:1 (Fall).
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### Manuscript Collections

Anne Burlak Timpson Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

House of Seven Gables Archives. House of Seven Gables Settlement Association, Salem, MA. The collection includes a complete set of Annual Reports; writings of Caroline Emmerton; materials relating to the restoration of the houses; scrapbooks of newspaper clippings, photographs and materials relating to the settlement house; cassette tapes of oral history interviews with Gables workers and neighbors recorded in 1978.

House of Seven Gables Settlement Association (HSGSA) Annual Reports. Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA. This collection of annual reports is almost complete.

House of Seven Gables. 1913. Official Program, Pageant of Salem, Kernwood, Salem, Mass., June 13, 14, 16 and 17, 1913. Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA.

National Park Service. 1935. "Proposed Historic Site Derby Wharf and Vicinity." Booklet of photographs. Historian's Files (Frayler), Salem Maritime NHS.

Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company Collection. Mss 442 1845-1947. Harvard Business School Archives. The Directors Records contained in this collection are most useful for the 1918 strike at the Pequot Mill.

Polish Society of St. Joseph. Record Book. Partially translated by Ewa Newman. Salem Maritime NHS collection. Invaluable record of the early activities of the St. Joseph Society. Minutes for the period 1897-1909 are somewhat loosely translated and summarized, and include lists of members, officers, activities, disciplinary actions, and religious observations.

- St. John's Polish Roman Catholic Church Archives. St. John's Polish Roman Catholic Church, Salem, MA. Collections include Birth, Death and Marriage Records; a variety of unpublished papers relating to the day to day functioning of the church; published histories of the church; limited registration records for St. John's School; miscellaneous photographs of church and school activities.
- St. Joseph Society Archives. St. John's Polish Roman Catholic Church, Salem, MA. Miscellaneous manuscript materials, including account books relating to various church societies; scattered dates.
- Sobocinski family records. Genealogies, newspaper clippings. Provided by Dorothy Sobocinski Filip and Joan Sobocinski Pizzello.

## APPENDIX A

### List of Interviews

Carberg, Edward	Salem neighborhood historian of part-Polish descent	July 14, 2008
Davidowicz, Jane	Derby Street native, daughter of immigrants of Polish descent	Sept. 4, 2008
Davidowicz, Joan	Salem native, active in community	Sept. 4, 2008
Filip, Dorothy	Derby Street neighborhood native and member of Sobocinski family	July 24, 2008
Korzeniewski, Fred	Salem resident of Polish background, cousin of Ed Luzinski	May 23, 2008
LaChapelle, David	part-Polish native of Derby Street	July 17, 2008
LaChapelle, Peter	Derby Street neighborhood native of Polish/FrenchCanadian background, Salem Maritime NHS Chief of Visitor Services	June 19, 2008
Luzinski, Ed	Derby Street neighborhood native and resident; former caretaker at House of Seven Gables; Polish community leader	May 23, 2008 July 14, 2008
Luzinski, Phyllis	Derby Street neighborhood native of Polish and Russian background; active in community	July 14, 2008
Moustakis, Linda	Derby Street neighborhood native	May 8, 2008
Nowak, Mary	Polish immigrant, resident of Derby Street neighborhood	May 28, 2008* Sept. 4, 2008
Pizzello, Joan	Derby Street neighborhood native and member of Sobocinski family	July 24, 2008
Potorski, Ron	Derby Street neighborhood native and resident, bar manager at Polish Legion of American Veterans	May 16, 2008
Rybicki, Stanley	Salem native of Polish descent	July 14, 2008
Spychalski, Bob	second-generation Polish funeral home director, active in many Polish organizations	July 8, 2008
Stupakiewicz, Dorothy	Derby Street neighborhood native	August 5, 2008
Swiniuch, Richard	Derby Street neighborhood native, former Salem city councillor and son of city councillor	May 28, 2008

Appendix A

Tyburc, Frank	Derby Street neighborhood native whose grandfather once owned the Hawkes House and was active in the St. Joseph Society	July 24, 2008
Walker, Buddy	bandleader, the Warsawiacki Orchestra; Salem resident of Polish background	May 16, 2008
Zujewski, Alice	Salem resident of Polish background, current member of Society of St. Joseph	May 23, 2008

*\*Interview conducted by Chuck Smythe, Northeast Ethnography Program, with Cathy Stanton.  
Other 2008 interviews were conducted by Cathy Stanton.*

In addition to the interviews conducted in 2008 for this project, a number of interviews were accessed and partially or completely transcribed from a 1978 collection of oral history tapes made by the House of the Seven Gables:

Chapin, Helen	former staff member, House of the Seven Gables	Oct. 18, 1978
Graczyk, Ed	Derby Street neighborhood native, former instructor at House of the Seven Gables	July 25, 1978
Kohn, Chester	Derby Street neighborhood native, business owner	Aug. 4, 1978
Kohn, Hedwiga (Harriet)	founder of Women's Polish American Citizens Club; active in community	n.d., 1978
McIntire, Elizabeth	former director, House of the Seven Gables	Oct. 18, 1978
Sobocinski, Ed	Derby Street neighborhood resident, descendant of one of earliest Salem Polish families	July 27, 1978
Szetala, Julian	former Salem city councilor, Derby Street neighborhood native	n.d., 1978
Theriault, Henry	Derby Street neighborhood resident, owner of business, community historian	n.d., 1978
Walczak, Wanda	long-time member of Women's Polish American Citizens Club; active in the community	July 26, 1978

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Project Documents**

The following documents were provided to interviewees and other active participants in this study:

- Project Summary Sheet

- NPS Legal Release

- Introductory Letter from Salem Maritime NHS Superintendent

- Informed Consent Form

- IRB Certificate of Approval



## Project Summary Sheet

*Ethnographic Study of Polish-Americans in Salem and their Associations with St. Joseph Hall, Salem Maritime National Historic Site*

Cathy Stanton, Ph.D., Principal Investigator  
Jane Becker, Ph.D., Associate

January 1, 2008

The Salem Maritime National Historic Site is sponsoring a study of Polish-Americans in Salem and the surrounding area, particularly those present-day community members who have personal memories and other connections relating to the St. Joseph Hall, a former Polish social and fraternal hall now owned by the park. The purpose of the study is to collect information about how former and present Polish-American residents of Salem's Derby Street neighborhood and their descendants understand and relate their life experiences to the Hall. The Park Service will use the data collected in this study to inform management decisions on how best to interpret the building and bring renewed vitality to the structure. The study will also explore the possibility of future collaboration between Salem Maritime NHS and Polish-Americans with connections to Salem. Such collaboration might include future events in the building and interpretive or archival projects based on the knowledge that is collected about the community,

The project will take place between January 2008 and March 2009. The primary researcher is Cathy Stanton, Ph.D., a cultural anthropologist working for the University of Massachusetts History Dept. under a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service. She will conduct interviews and related research and may be reached at 978-249-8299, 1139 Chestnut Street, Athol, MA 01331, cstanton@tiac.net, or by cell phone at 978-413-2312. Her associate is Jane Becker, Ph.D., a public historian who will be conducting archival and related research in the Salem area. She may be reached at 781-643-5932, 29 Academy Street, Arlington, MA 02174, jsbecker@alumni.hamilton.edu.

The research will consist in part of interviews with people familiar with the history and activities of Salem's vibrant Polish community and the study of documentary and archival materials. Interviews will include "life history" interviews designed to gather data about the family, work, and community experiences of those being interviewed.

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. Persons choosing to participate in interviews will be asked to sign a consent form explaining the project and a release form authorizing the use of the interview information by the National Park Service. Names will not be published for persons not wanting their names to appear in the final report.

A Research Design/Work Plan for the study is available upon request from Cathy Stanton. Questions about the project can be directed to Chuck Smythe, Northeast Regional Ethnography Program Manager, National Park Service, 15 State Street, Boston, MA 02108, 617-223-5014.

## U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service

### *Legal Release*

This agreement is entered into by \_\_\_\_\_  
(*interviewee*) and Salem Maritime National Historic Park of the National Park Service. Both parties enter into this agreement in order to facilitate the future use of the oral history interview conducted on \_\_\_\_\_ (*date*) for historical and educational purposes.

The interviewee herein grants, relinquishes, and transfers to the National Park Service the following rights:

1. All legal title and property rights for said interview.
2. All rights, title, and interest in copyrights in said interview, and more particularly, the exclusive rights of reproduction, distribution, and public display.

I herein warrant that I have not assigned or in any manner encumbered or impaired any of the aforementioned rights in my oral memoir. I hereby authorize the National Park Service to record, transcribe, and edit the interview, and to use and re-use the interview in whole or in part. I understand that the National Park Service shall have no obligation to use the interview. I further understand that I am to receive no financial compensation for my participation in the project.

---

Interviewee

---

Date

---

Interviewer, on behalf of the NPS

---

Date

## Introductory Letter from Salem Maritime NHS Superintendent



### United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Salem Maritime National Historic Site  
Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site  
174 Derby Street  
Salem, Massachusetts 01970-5136

IN REPLY REFER TO:

January 2, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

Between January 2008 and March 2009, Salem Maritime National Historic Site is sponsoring a study of Polish-Americans in Salem and the surrounding area, particularly those present-day community members who have emotional connections to St. Joseph Hall, a former Polish social and fraternal hall now owned by the park. The purpose of the study is to collect information about how former Polish-American residents of Salem's Derby Street neighborhood and their descendants understand and relate their life experiences to the site. The Park Service will use the data collected in this study to inform management decisions on how best to interpret the building and bring renewed vitality to the structure. The study will also explore the possibility of future collaborative uses of the building and knowledge about the community between Salem Maritime NHS and Polish-Americans with connections to Salem.

The researchers for the project are Cathy Stanton, a cultural anthropologist, and Jane Becker, a historian. They are associated with the History Department at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. They will be conducting archival research and interviews in the Salem area beginning in January 2008 and continuing intermittently until March 2009. They will be exploring the creation and development of Salem's Polish-American community over time, with a particular focus on the part played in the community by St. Joseph Hall. The park hopes to host at least one community gathering during the study period, and to continue strengthening its relationship with people who feel a sense of attachment to the hall and the Derby Street neighborhood.

Those who have been interviewed for the project will be welcome to read the final report based on this research when it is available.

Questions about this project should be addressed to Chuck Smythe, Northeast Regional Ethnography Program Director, at 617-223-5014 or [chuck\\_smythe@nps.gov](mailto:chuck_smythe@nps.gov).

Sincerely,

Patricia S. Trap  
Superintendent

## Informed Consent Form

### CONSENT FORM

**Study Title:** Ethnographic Study of Polish-Americans in Salem and their Associations with St. Joseph Hall  
**Principal Investigator:** Cathy Stanton  
**Sponsor:** Salem Maritime National Historic Site/National Park Service

---

**1. WHAT IS THIS FORM?**

This form is called a Consent Form. It will give you information about the study so you can make an informed decision about participation in this research study.

**2. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?**

The study will produce information about Salem's Polish-American community and their associations with St. Joseph Hall, which is now part of the site.

**3. WHERE WILL THE STUDY TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?**

The study will be conducted between January 2008 and March 2009. The principal investigator, Cathy Stanton will be conducting interviews in and around Salem, MA during this time. Her associate, Jane Becker, will be conducting archival research.

**4. WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?**

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to provide information about the St. Joseph Hall, the Derby Street neighborhood in Salem, and/or Salem's Polish-American community. This information will be collected via tape-recorded interviews that will take between one and two hours to conduct.

**5. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?**

Benefits from this study include documenting and preserving the history of Salem's Polish immigrant community-Americans in Salem, consolidating existing materials on the community so that they may be used in park interpretation and genealogical and other forms of research, and strengthening the relationship between the park and those who feel a sense of attachment to St. Joseph Hall.

**7. WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THIS STUDY?**

We believe there are no known risks associated with this research study; however, a possible inconvenience may be the time it takes to complete the study.

**8. HOW WILL MY PERSONAL INFORMATION BE PROTECTED?**

At any time during the interview, you have the right to specify that you are speaking off the record, or to request that certain statements not be recorded or quoted. You are under no obligation to provide information and you may choose to end the interview at any time. You will be given an opportunity to review the transcript of your interview(s) before any of your information is shared with others. Tapes and transcripts of interviews will be part of a project archive that will be curated at Salem Maritime National Historic Site.

University of Massachusetts Amherst-IRB  
(413) 545-3428  
Approval Date 4-4-08  
Valid Through 4-4-09  
IRB Signature Nancy Sweet

**9. WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?**

Take as long as you like before you make a decision. The researcher will be happy to answer any question you have about this study. You are welcome to contact Cathy Stanton at 1139 Chestnut Street, Athol MA 01331, phone (978)249-8299, email [cstanton@tiac.net](mailto:cstanton@tiac.net).

If you have further questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the University of Massachusetts Amherst Human Research Protection Office (HRPO) at (413) 545-3428 or by email at [humansubjects@ora.umass.edu](mailto:humansubjects@ora.umass.edu).

**10. WHAT IF I REFUSE TO GIVE OR WITHDRAW MY PERMISSION?**

You should recognize that your participation is voluntary and that you may refuse to participate or may withdraw consent and discontinue participation in the study at any time.

I have read and I understand this consent form. A copy of this form has been offered to me.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature:                      Print Name:                      Date:

By signing below I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person                      Print Name:                      Date:  
Obtaining Consent

University of Massachusetts Amherst-IRB  
(413) 545-3428  
Approval Date 4-4-08  
Valid Through 4-4-09  
IRB Signature Nancy Sweet

## IRB Certificate of Approval



UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS  
AMHERST

Office of Research Affairs  
Research Administration Building  
70 Butterfield Terrace  
Amherst, MA 01003-9242

Office of the Vice Provost for Research

voice: 413.545.3428  
fax: 413.577.1728

### University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Certification of IRB Approval

Date: April 4, 2008  
To: Professor Cathy Stanton, Department of Anthropology  
From: Margaret Burggren, Human Protection Administrator

The University of Massachusetts Amherst Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed the following research protocol in accordance with the UMASS Federalwide Assurance.

<b>Title:</b> <i>Ethnographic Study of Salem Maritime National Historic Site, OGCA# 108-0382</i>
<b>Status:</b> <b>APPROVED</b> - Expedited Review effective April 4, 2008
<b>Date:</b> This project approval will expire on <b>April 4, 2009.</b>

The IRB approval is granted with the understanding that investigator(s) will do the following:

Modifications – Changes in any aspect of the study (for example, project design, procedures, consent forms, advertising materials, additional key personnel or subject population) are submitted to the IRB for approval before instituting the changes.

Consent Forms – All subjects are given a copy of the signed consent form. Investigators are required to retain signed consent documents for six (6) years after close of the grant or three (3) years if unfunded.

Training – Human subject training certificates, including those for any newly added personnel, are provided for all key personnel.

Adverse Events – All adverse events occurring in the course of the protocol are reported to the IRB as soon as possible, but not later than ten (10) working days.

Continuing Review – IRB Protocol Report Forms are submitted annually at least two weeks prior to expiration, six weeks for protocols that required full review.

Completion Report – The IRB is notified when your study is complete. To do this, complete the IRB Protocol Report Form and select "Final Report."

Please refer to the web page at <http://www.umass.edu/research/comply/humancomp.html>, call the Human Research Protection Office (HRPO) at 5-3428, or e-mail Nancy Swett at [neswett@ora.umass.edu](mailto:neswett@ora.umass.edu) with any questions you may have regarding this certification.



## APPENDIX C

### Minutes of the St. Joseph Society

#### Minutes of the St. Joseph Society, 1899-1909

translated by Ewa Newman

The Polish nation after the last of the three acts (1795) by its neighbors Russia, Germany and Austria fell entirely under the foreign rule. The armed uprisings and revolts by the Polish people were met with only more severe oppression. Many participants in those protests were forced to flee the country. Among the first to arrive in America were the notable Tadeusz Kosciuszko and general Pulawski. Those two prominent men became heroes of the American War of Independence and by their actions, prepared the way for other Poles, who were welcomed into US. Therefore, after a few decades, many US cities and towns had scores of Polish residents who in turn aided the immigration of their kin.

Salem – one of the oldest New England towns, was not discovered by Polish immigrants until late in 19-th century. The first to arrive were the 1864 uprising participants, Robaczewski the Smroczyński and Malinowski families and Miler. By 1900, there were eight Polish families in Salem and more than ten single Polish people. They found work in the textile factory of Namkeag Steam Co., where they made \$ 3.50 – \$ 7.50 a week. Later, several people worked at Danvers Bleachery for \$ 7.00 - \$ 9.00 a week. At that time, everyone was satisfied with such earnings and grateful for the opportunity to make a decent living. Most new immigrants were frugal so they were able to help their families back in the old country.

Polish immigrants felt isolated from the local population because they spoke little English and did not know the local customs. However, there were significant divisions within this ethnic group. Polish people of Salem came from all different parts of the old country: Some were from the East, which was under the Russia rule, others from the West, under the German rule and yet another group from the more free Galicja region of Southern Poland, under the Austro-Hungarian rule. They found themselves thrown together and compelled to form a cohesive community here in the new country. The frictions between the various groups often manifested themselves as loud quarrels and fights, which often took place during large social gathering such as weddings and christening celebrations. The participants of those rows on occasions ended up in a hospital or at the courthouse.

The Poles experienced the animosity toward them from the population in general and would not dare to walk alone in broad daylight and even less so at night.

#### 1897

After a few more years, more educated immigrants came to the area. Also the longer the Polish immigrants resided in Salem, the more they become aware of the need to work better together. They wanted to create a forum where all matters concerning Polish affairs could be discussed. To serve this purpose, following an example of other Polish population centers, it was decided to form a Society. Thanks to the efforts of several prominent individuals, in the year 1897 a Society of Saint Joseph was established. The exact goals and bylaws of this society are not available. The seven



members who joined without dues were:

A.S. Kotarski  
Farciszek Luziński  
Jozef Laskowski  
Marcin Witos  
Franciszek Sobocinski  
Jozef Kowalski  
Wladyslaw Jastrzembski

## **1901**

Three years later, in 1901, Father Jan Chmielewski came to Boston. He was establishing a Polish parish there. He asked the Polish community in Salem to help raise funds for the construction of a Polish church in Boston. In turn, he would come to Salem and perform some pastoral duties here, in the basement of the Irish Church of the Immaculate Conception. At that time, a promise was made that, in the future, when the Polish population in Salem rose in numbers, the Polish parish in Boston would help with the funding for a Polish church in Salem. How this arrangement worked out can be discovered in the History of Saint Joseph Society of Brotherly Help, published on the 25-th anniversary of the organization.

Through the first few years the Society was dominated by members who came from central and eastern parts of Poland. They failed to bring in wider membership and the meetings of the Society were suspended until 1899.

## **1899**

By the year 1899 the Polish community grew and they decided to reorganize and revive the Society. Again, the bylaws would be found in the History of Saint Joseph Society of Brotherly Help mentioned above. On March 5, 1899 at 2:30 pm a meeting took place in the Hall on Central Street. It was organized by Konstanty Wolan and Wladyslaw Gonet. This was a general meeting open to all Polish people of Salem. The goal was to establish or revive the Society of St. Joseph. A member of the original St. Joseph Society, A. S. Kotarski was asked to speak and to explain the goals of the Society. Those goals were to serve the needs of Polish community and to provide mutual assistance. After this inspiring speech, thirty people immediately become new members of the renewed Society:

Wladyslaw Gonet  
Konstanty Wolan  
Walenty Sobocinski  
Andrzej Dubiel  
Aleksander S. Kotarski  
Franciszek Luziński  
Franciszek Luziński, Jr  
Bronislaw Sobocinski  
Franciszek Walczyszewski  
Jozef Laskowski  
Jan Jendraszek  
Teofil Lewalski  
Feliks Lotarski  
Franciszek Sobocinski

Marcin Golen  
Marcin Witkos  
Izydor Jordan  
Wladyslaw Kocur  
Jan Przydzial  
Andrzej Nowak  
Szczepan Stefanik  
Filip Wolan  
Piotr Wojtas  
Jan Gonet  
Jozef Czaja  
Jan Juchnowski  
Tomasz Gondela  
Franciszek Mroklinski  
Wladyslaw Rybicki

Then the Board of the Society was elected:

President: Franciszek Sobocinski

Vice-president: Antoni Dubiel

Treasurer: Konstanty Wolan

Secretary: Wladyslaw Gonet

Cashier: Jan Przydzial

Safe Keepers: Jozef Laskowski, Franciszek Luziensi, Jozef Czaja

Custodian: Tomasz Gondela

It was decided to keep Saint Joseph as patron of the new Brotherly Help Society. The funds of \$25.38 from the previous Society were transferred to the new one, all of the previous members were admitted for no fee and new members were charged \$1.00 each so the total collected was \$50.58.

The next meeting took place on March 19, 1899 – The Feast of Saint Joseph. At that time four new members joined: Jozef Kowalski, Herman Tyburc, Jan Grusza and Wladyslaw Jastrzembski.

At March 19 meeting the dues were raised to \$1.25, quarterly dues were collected and in total, with the initiation dues \$36.50 was collected. The church emblems from the previous Society were given to the new Society. The work on the new bylaws for the Society was assigned. The fee for the use of the hall was paid for through the voluntary contributions as not to overburden the Society's budget.

At the third meeting held in April, it was decided that as a fundraiser, The First Ball would be held. It occurred and it brought in \$17.85.

The May meeting did not take place due to some misunderstanding between the members.

On June 4 a meeting was devoted to the discussion of the bylaws.

One point debated at length was whether a member may receive assistance from the Society after six month or after a year of the date of joining. Another question was whether new members had to be at least 18 or 20 years of age to join. It was agreed that the age of a new member at the time of joining had to be between 18 and 45 years.

Another ball for June 17, 1899 was planned. It was also decided to have pins made with the name of the Society so that the members could purchase them for \$ 0.25 and be distinguished from non-members at the ball.

At the end of the meeting, it was decided to ask Pastor Jan Chmielinski to make a confession in Polish language possible to Society members and others in Salem. Jan Gross, Antoni Gonet and Franciszek Luzienski went to Boston with the request. On June 24 a Vicar was sent to Salem from Boston and heard the confessions.

At the July 2, 1899 meeting, following the letter of the bylaws, penalties of \$ 0.25 were assigned to members who did not attend the meetings (10 members were penalized: J. Jendraszek, A.S. Kotarski, F. Walarczanski, M. Golan, M. Witkos, J. Jordan, S. Stefanik, F. Wolan, J. Czaja, W. Rybicki)

The vice-president A. Dubiel refused to participate in the confession and because of pressure, resigned from the Society. Jozef Kowalski was elected to the vice-president position. A new member, Jozef Piasecki was admitted.

Reported profit from the ball was \$17.00. The treasury totaled \$ 144.44.

At the August 6 meeting a new member, Andrzej Swierczek was admitted. K. Wolan, who did not attend was suspended, and Marcin Witkos was elected to fulfill the duties of the treasurer. A.S. Kotarski and A. Swierczek were to review the books.

At the September 3-rd meeting four members were fined \$ 0.25 for missing the meeting. The next ball was going to take place on September 16.

At October 8, 1899 meeting Jan Gonet was elected as safe keeper in place of M. Golan. The cashier, Jan Przydzial resigned so K. Wolan was elected to replace him. The motion of F. Luzienski to expel A.S. Kotarski passed, based on the Society's bylaws: § 2, art. 29, letter "g". A. S. Kotarski was publicly, outside of Society meeting, criticizing and making fun of religious practices of the Society. Jan Przydzial was assigned to revise the books.

Because of the small turn out and the expense of renting the Hall, the November meeting was held at the apartment of the secretary M. Witkos. The quarterly confession took place. An Autumn ball was organized and it brought profit of \$ 15.65.

At the December 1, 1899 meeting A. Gonet resigned from the Society and Jan Przydzial was elected to his position.

## **1900**

On January 7, 1900 a new member, Stanislaw Dobrzelecki was admitted.

Cashier K. Wolan, who refused to pay a total fee of \$ 50.00, resigned from the Society and Herman Tyburc was elected to replace him. It was decided that at the next ball, if the profit would be more than \$ 10.00, the members would be admitted free of charge.

The February 4 meeting took place at the home of Jan Gross on Union Street. There were penalties imposed on two members: on B. Sobocinski, \$ 1.00 for not participating in the confession, and on K. Wolan, \$ 2.50 for speaking out of order and disturbing the proceedings of the meeting.

The last ball before Lent was to be organized, and the profits from it would go towards a gift of cope for the Priest, who would come to hear the Lent confession on the Feast of St. Joseph on March 19. The president, F. Sobocinski made a personal donation of \$10.00 for the cope.

At the March 4-th, 1900 meeting the profit of \$ 18.17 was reported. A voluntary collection at the meeting was to supplement the funds for the Priest's cope. After this collection, the total for the purpose was \$ 51.50. The cope was purchased for \$ 50.00. The confession took place on March 18, and the Holy Mass on March 19-th, the Feast of Saint Joseph.

The annual financial report:

Members' dues \$ 80.00  
Total income \$ 446.80  
Expenses \$ 228.71  
Net income \$ 218.09

Activities' report:

Members accepted 38  
Members resigned and expelled 4  
Number of balls 7  
Confessions held 2  
Meetings held in the Hall 11  
Meetings held at private homes 2  
One meeting was messed  
A gift for the church \$ 50.00

On April 2, 1900 at an Annual Meeting a new Board was elected.

President Jozef Kowalski  
Vice-president Andrzej Swierczek  
Treasurer Marcin Witkos  
Secretary Jan Przydzial  
Cashier Herman Tyburc  
Help for the Sick Jan Gross, Franciszek Luzienski  
Book keepers Jan Gross, Stanisaw Wilczenski  
Safe keepers Jozef Laskowski, Franciszek Luzienski Jr., Isydor Jordan  
Custodian Jozef Piasecki

The reports from all of the outgoing Board members were presented and they were not in good order. It was decided to purchase the proper book keeping books, receipt booklets for the better records of the sick leave assistance, and an official seal of the Society. Marcin Witkos was going to make those purchases immediately.

The May 6, 1900 meeting took place at the home of Jan Gross at 58 Union Street. Here a seal was selected from various samples presented, and it was ordered for the price of \$ 5.00. Jozef Kowalski introduced a motion to change the design of the club pins worn at the balls. The current one pictured St. Joseph, and that may not be appropriate to be worn while dancing and drinking. The motion was passed, but delayed, to be acted upon in the future. The next ball was to be held on May 19 and the members would be admitted free of charge, but if anyone got drunk they would

have to pay \$ 1.00 penalty.

The June 3, 1900 meeting took place at the hall of St. John's Church. This meeting was short and only the reports were read, because the hall was to be used for the parish meeting afterwards.

At the July 8 meeting at St. John's Hall, a new member, Karol Kolm was accepted. The treasurer resigned and Stanislaw Wilczenski was unanimously elected to replace him. Help for the sick was also discussed and Jan Gross was awarded help for two weeks and J. Przydzial for one week.

At the August 5 meeting at St. John's Hall, it was decided to organize a ball on Sept. 25.

At the September 2, 1900 meeting, it was decided to keep the money, collected during meetings at St. John's Hall, in the bank account together with other funds of the Society. M. Witkos was elected a new secretary since the previous one was absent from many meetings.

At the October 28, 1900 meeting help was awarded to F. Luziński. The date for the Benefit Ball was set for November 28. It was also decided that because of worsening of relationships with pastor Chmielinski, after the quarterly dues were collected, there would be no general meeting until the Annual Meeting on April 7, 1901. All urgent matters would be handled by the Board.

The reasons for the disagreements with pastor Chmielinski were as follows. As mentioned in the introduction, the Holy Mass in Polish language had been celebrated each Sunday in the basement of the Irish Church of the Immaculate Conception by either Father Chmielinski or a Vicar from Boston. This location was not ideal. Despite the agreement with the Irish Pastor and the payments made for the use of the basement, noisy activities regularly took place during Polish services. On one occasion the local custodian walked in wearing his cap and walked around, disrespectful of the service. This incident caused an outrage and a parish meeting took place at St. John's Hall on Washington Street. Father Chmielinski was asked to establish a Polish Parish to help them erect a Polish Church in Salem. Father Chmielinski pointed out that very large sum of money would be needed. Soon fundraising began, \$ 400.00 was collected and there was great willingness to continue. However, Father Chmielinski had doubts that sufficient funds could be raised and proposed to keep the money collected thus far in Boston. This did not meet the expectations of the Salem residents and most of the collected money was returned to the donors. The remaining sum was put in the bank into the account of the Society of St. Joseph, as so called "parish money". This decision and the conduct of the Society were publicly criticized by Father Chmielinski during his Sunday sermon. This discord caused the Society's decision to become less active until the Annual Meeting scheduled for April 1901.

The Society's activities for the year:

Accepted members 1  
Income from quarterly dues \$ 65.00  
Help given to the sick \$ 20.00  
Total income \$266.58  
Expenses \$176.98  
Total in the account incl. "parish money" \$284.14

Before the Feast of St. Joseph, it was decided to ask Father Chmielinski to allow for the confession in Polish, as was required in the Society's bylaws. The representatives of the Society were received by Father Chmielinski and he promised to send Father Joseph Czubek to help the parishioners in Salem, also he promised to support the Society. The \$30.00 of the "parish money" was given to Father Chmielinski and the remaining \$15.00 was to be given later.

Father Czubek came to Salem, spoke supportively of the Society and even joined it, which he announced at church.

## **1901**

At the March 17, 1901 meeting, nine new members joined including Father Czubek. The new Board was elected.

President Father Joseph Czubek  
Vice president Herman Tyburc  
Secretary Marcin Witkos  
Treasurer Stanislaw Wilczenski  
Cashier Wladyslaw Sobocinski  
Safe keepers Jan Kowalski, M. Golen  
Revisers Karol Kolm, Piotr Robaczewski  
Sick help Teofil Rynkowski, Marcin Kulakowski  
Custodian Leonard Maga

At the July 7, 1901 meeting 11 new members were accepted. The “parish money” of \$15.00 was given to Father Chmielinski. The membership Committee established the criteria for the acceptance of new candidates. Members of the Society were to have a visible presence at the Sunday church services, namely 6 members were to hold special candles at the services.

The Society was recognized outside the Polish community, as evident by the invitation from the French Church to participate in the consecration of their new Church building. For this occasion, three flags were purchased: the Society’s flag, the Polish national flag and the American flag.

## **1902**

The Society was rapidly growing, with 6 new members accepted in December 1901, 20 new members in January 1902, and 19 new members in February 1902. However, Karol Kolm was expelled from the Society for mocking of the religious practices. New members:

Franciszek Kowalski  
Feliks Dabrowski  
Michal Malski  
Jan Jedraszek  
Wladyslaw Piasecki  
Jan Swiniarski  
Boleslaw Szymanski  
Stanislaw Luziński  
Boleslaw Skomiecki  
Jan Sobocinski  
Teofil Bartnicki  
Dominik Zdziaborski  
Wladyslaw Pszenny  
Jozef Grzybiński  
Franciszek Karczewski  
Stanislaw Szczechowicz  
Antoni Przetakiewicz

Franciszek Wasiolek  
Jan Laskowski  
Wladyslaw Dobrosielski  
Ignacy Walenc  
Antoni Grabowski  
Teofil Pontkowski  
Bronislaw Walenc  
Maciej Lajkowski  
Wladyslaw Rucienski  
Jan Lewalski  
Franciszek Sendkowski  
Jan Mendalka  
Stanislaw Dobrozielski

The February 8, 1902 Ball was for the benefit of the Polish children from town of Wrzesnia (under German rule). They were severely punished for speaking their native Polish language at school and their case become widely publicized. \$14.00 was collected by the Society for the cause.

The Mayor of Salem was for the first time present at the ball and he made a speech praising the Society.

Annual budget:  
Total budget \$807.21  
Expenses \$647.94  
Profit \$159.94  
Bank account total \$450.00

New Members:  
Adam Olendrzewski  
Jan Stanczak  
Aleksander Szczechowicz  
Jozef Jankowski  
Jozef Ejmond  
Adam Korcienski  
Jozef Mielcarz  
Antoni Przenny  
Ignacy Olszewski  
Andrzej Budko  
Jan Swiniarski  
Franciszek Budko  
Wladyslaw Trojanowski  
Felicjan Zielinski  
Franciszek Zybert  
Jan Szalkowski  
Franciszek Drankowski  
Wladyslaw Wichmanowski  
Franciszek Zakrzewski  
Franciszek Karczewski  
Jan Juchowski

Ignacy Bialkowski  
Antoni Potorski  
Antoni Kalinowski  
Waclaw Szymanski  
Boleslaw Szymanski  
Andrzej Suldzenski  
Jozef Bartnicki  
Bronislaw Sobocinski  
Jozef Sowinski of Ipswich  
Antoni Szmyt  
Franciszek Piwonski  
Wawrzyniec Puchalski

On September 1, 1902 two major fund raisers were organized by the Society of St. Joseph. A lottery brought in \$208.28 and a ball \$76.70 towards the building fund for the Polish church.

John F. Hurley, the mayor of Salem, spoke at the September 7, 1902 meeting of the Society and encouraged those who qualify to seek American citizenship. He promised to support these applications.

It was decided to rent a hall and make it available to the Society's members for informal gatherings and entertainment as well as for special occasions. For \$20.00 a month a hall was rented at the corner of Derby and Union Streets, name of it was Carsey or Cassey (spelling?) Hall. A billiard table was purchased, to be used at the hall. Playing for money was not allowed.

The fee for the use of the Hall for a wedding was \$10.00 if beer was served, and \$ 7.00 if no beer was served. For the members it was \$1.00 less. The picture of Saint Joseph was hung in the Hall. There was a special meeting in November concerning incorporating of the Society.

The help for the sick continued to be granted almost every month for one or two members: typically \$ 5.00 or \$ 10.00.

In December \$1.00 was collected from all members of the Society for the altar for the new Polish church being built in the neighborhood.

### **1903**

July 5, 1903 was the festive day of consecration of the Polish Church on Herbert Street. The Society of St. Joseph from Lawrence and the Society of Our Lady of Czestochowa from Boston were also present. The Salem Society of St. Joseph provided hospitality at their Hall to the members of other Societies.

At January 3, 1904 meeting the annual budget was reported.

Income for the year 1903: \$ 1,039.11  
Spending \$ 859.42  
Help for the sick \$ 160.00  
Bank account total: \$ 775.39

While Father Czubek was away, Herman Tyburc was elected the Society's President.



Wladyslaw Sobocinski was elected Vice-President. The decision was made to establish a library for the Society, \$25.00 was designated for book purchases and Marcin Witkos was to take care of this project. In addition, there were going to be theatrical performances held by Society's members. The regular monthly meeting date was set for the first Monday of each month.

## 1904

On May 30-th 1904 the Society proudly celebrated its fifth anniversary, complete with the Mass at the Polish Church and a procession from the church (on Herbert street) to St. John's Hall on Washington Street. The banquet followed from 3 pm to 11 pm.

The rent of the hall on Derby Street was raised from \$ 15.00 to \$ 25.00, which prompted the discussion of building of Society's own hall. There was a general vote on another issue important to the making of payments for the hall. This was the issue of whether there should be beer sales at the hall. At first, by one vote a "no beer" rule was passed despite some loud protests from the "pro-beer" members. However, that vote was invalid, as there were more ballots cast, than members present. Finally, the rules were established to allow serving of beer 6 days a week with the exception on Sundays. Last round was to be at 10 pm on weeknights and 11 pm on Saturdays. Penalties for intoxication were \$ 0.50, \$1.00 and \$1.50 for the first, second and third offence. The Society continued to make efforts to eliminate the unruly behavior associated with beer consumption by its members.

\$75.00 was awarded to Aniela Szczechowicz, the widow of the late Jan Szczechowicz, who had been a member of the Society for four month before his death. Mrs. Szczechowicz expressed her deep appreciation of the gift.

The society was present at the consecration of the Polish Church in Lowell and was commended for its festive contribution to the ceremony.

Some new rules for the rental of the hall were established. No rentals would be granted on Sundays. On other days, rentals were available at the discretion of the hall warden, whose function was rotated among the members. The beer could be brought to the hall from elsewhere or purchased at the hall.

The Society was to have its own marching band. The band leader was to give lessons at \$ 4.00 per lesson. The Society would pay him the first \$100.00. After that, the members would continue at their own expense and would also contribute \$ 5.00 each toward the purchase of the instruments.

The following rules were established for the band members of the Society of St. Joseph Band:

1. Band members must belong to the Society.
2. The band is to be closely associated and overseen by the Society
3. Every band member for a \$ 10.00 fee may keep his instrument home and practice it.
4. There are penalties for failing to fulfill the duties by any band member.
5. Members of the band may be removed from the band if they repeatedly fail in fulfilling their obligations.
6. Members must take good care of their instruments, there would be periodical inspections of the instruments.
7. For the first five processions the band would play for the Society free of charge. After that the fee would be paid. The band would also be able to play outside the organization as well as perform at banquets for a fee to be agreed upon in the future.
8. Every band member is to sign an agreement about returning his instrument once he leaves the Society.

## 1905

In January 1905 the annual meeting took place. The Treasurer's report is following:

Total income 1,362.21

Expenses 1,298.50

Bank Account 864.47

Help for the sick 202.50

Deposit for the instruments 100.00

Assets 534.70

Total membership 94

New president was Wacław Pszenny, Vice-president, Peter Robaczewski.

In February 1905 St. Joseph's Society members traveled to Lawrence, Massachusetts to participate at the consecration of the Polish Church there. The musicians were paid \$ 40.00 and the railway charged over \$ 85.00 for the rental of the private train. One member was later charged \$ 1.00 for intoxication.

It was decided that some penalties would be needed for breaking into the Hall on Derby Street by members who force the lock to use the Hall after hours.

At April 2, 1905 meeting seven new members were accepted, 17 in May and three more in June.

Stanisław Wilczenski, 26

Franciszek Leman, 17

Józef Swiniarski, 24

Stanisław Włodarski, 29

Teofil Bogacki, 24

Franciszek Graczyk

Jan Mysłowski, 20

Leon Jaworski, 26

Józef Slimak, 38

Władysław Grochowski, 18

Paweł Grabowski, 40

Stefan Grabowski, 16

Alexander Blazewicz, 22

Konstanty Jarosz, 19

Jan Jankowski, 19

Julian Szczechowicz, 38

Wacław Kawczenski, 26

Zygmunt Kawczenski, 26

Teofil Jarzyńska, 32

Ferdynand Nadzowski, 21

Jan Zuchowski, 25

Antoni Kobierski, 16

Franciszek Bokisz, 19

Jan Marszałek, 22

Maximilian Dobrzeńcki, 21

Hieronim Czarniewski, 25

There were complaints in the neighborhood about the weddings being too loud and rowdy. It was decided that there should be no music at the weddings and those Society members who were not invited guests should stay away.

In June 1905 the Society had 137 members and a bank account of \$1,004.00.

At the July 3, 1905 meeting Franciszek Karczewski was elected as Society's president and Peter Robaczewski as the vice-president. There were more new members:

Jan Tymienski, 18  
Ignacy Welenc, 25  
Heronim Blaszkewicz, 20  
Ignacy Klosowski, 19  
Wladyslaw Rozanski  
Jan Spychal  
Jozef Kowalski (2-nd)

The summer rules for the distribution of beer at the Hall on Sundays were relaxed and hours 1-3 pm and 5-9 pm were adopted as long as there were no church services at those times.

There were some disagreements as to who should be in charge of the beer and what the price per crate should be: \$0.90, \$1.00 or \$ 1.15. Another question was whether to purchase beer from one of the members, Peter Robaczewski, or an outsider, an American distributor. After a long debate and a resignation of Karczewski as president, the vote favored Peter Robaczewski.

However, serving of beer continued to be accompanied by fights and rowdy behavior. For this reason at the October 5, 1905 meeting it was decided to ban the sale of beer at the Hall "for once and for all".

New members joined the Society:

Stanislaw Kaslewicz  
Franciszek Gajewski, 18  
Adam Belkowski, 36  
Ignacy Michalowski, 27  
Jozef Grynaczkiewicz, 30  
Adolf Rudzinski, 20  
Stefan Leszczenski, 20  
Mikolaj Sebastynowicz, 30  
Franciszek Sobocienski, 34  
Jozef Sawicki, 38  
Jakub Malski, 18  
Franciszek Szczechowicz  
Jozef Tyburski, 20  
Stefan Zdanowicz, 25  
Franciszek Dorogiewicz, 22  
Bronislaw Zielski, 17  
Heronim Hojnacki, 18  
Jozef Kolm, 25

In October 1905 the Society participated in the celebration in West Lynn of the Society of Michael

the Archangel.

On October 21, 1905 a special meeting was held for the purpose of deciding about purchasing of a hall which become available. The Society did not have enough funds so the sale of bonds was held (at \$5 and \$20). The interest would be 4% (1% more then bank bonds' rate). A committee was selected for the purchase of the hall, but the price posted was \$1,400.00 was too high at that time.

At December 1905 meeting six new members joined:

Konstanty Falkowski, 23  
Wladyslaw Falkowski, 26  
Waclaw Bukowski, 20  
Zygmunt Luzienski, 18  
Jan Karbowski, 16  
Waclaw Szymanski, 25

\$94.96 was sent for the poor in Poland. 1905 income was \$2,274.11 and the expenses were \$1,720.73

## 1906

At the January 1906 annual meeting the financial report was presented.

Deposited at the bank \$420.00

Help for the sick expenditure \$130.00

Fee for the hall expenditure \$607.00

The new board was elected, Teofil Bartnicki was elected president and Stanislaw Tusienski vice-president. It was decided not to rent the hall out for any outside parties or weddings on Sundays and to put up only those posters and announcements on the hall walls which had been approved by the president. It was also decided to collect \$0.50 from each member and to present the sum with condolences whenever a member's wife passes away. Such collection was taken for Franciszek Wasiolek who had recently been widowed and \$67.00 was awarded to him.

New members:

Michal Lotarski, 34  
Antoni Kalapinski, 29  
Antoni Swiniarski, 32  
Michal Jankowski, 23  
Antoni Wieczorek

At March 1906 meeting it was decided that the Society would look for another hall to rent for a better price or would buy their own hall and again a committee was selected to look into the matter. In the meantime Father Czubek from St. John's agreed to meetings of the Society in the church basement, including a band practice two evenings a week, all at the cost of electricity only.

At the April 5 1906 meeting it was decided to accept the invitation of the St. Michael Society in Lynn and participate in the consecration of the Polish Church in Lynn. All members of St. Joseph Society were to be present, under the penalty of \$3.00 for missing the ceremony, the same penalty as for getting drunk at the ceremony.

The invitation of The Polish Workers' Party (PPS) to join together with them in the celebration was rejected.

At the May 7 1906 meeting the need for a hall was reiterated. The invitation from St. John Society of Salem to celebrate Polish Constitution Day of May 3 was considered, but since the celebrations were already taking place before the invitation arrived, St. Joseph Society did not participate. A banquet took place on May 19.

New members were:

Wladyslaw Sarnowski

Bronislaw Zaranski

Apolinary Chludzianski, 37

Jozef Szczech

Stanislaw Pszenny

Czeslaw Defanski

At July 9 1906 meeting the president resigned and Jozef Laskowski was elected to replace him. The matter of purchase of a hall was considered more urgent. Cassey did not want to rent out his hall for \$15.00 a month any longer. Franciszek Karczenski suggested the purchase of a lot, so the Society could build a hall to suit its needs. Other business discussed included some disagreements with the musicians, who did not keep a good inventory of all the instruments. On one occasion the bend did not show up to play at a Society's dance in protest of the stricter rules. The matter was eventually resolved. The bend leader was to travel to Poland and that prompted a closer scrutiny of the band activities.

In September 1906 there was \$1,595.60 in the bank and \$24.47 cash. There was a parade with music on November 29 (possibly to commemorate the Polish Uprising of 1830). Other Polish societies were invited to participate.

New members:

Antoni Brzozowski, 18

Antoni Jaworski

Franciszek Rutkowski

Jozef Mikulski

Bronislaw Tyburc, 16

Wladyslaw Tyburc, 21

Marian Nicgorski, 19

Marian Seiazor, 14

There was a proposal to buy a house with an adjacent lot for possible expansion at Daniels Street and Daniels Court from Franciszek Sobocinski. However the location did not offer a prominent street front and for that reason was rejected.

At the December 2, 1906 meeting it was announced that a building could be purchased at 160 Derby Street for the Society. Teofil Bartnicki and Wladyslaw Sobocinski explained the purchasing process. An attorney was present at the meeting to answer questions from the members. In the future, the Society would have full rights to sell the building, providing that the majority of members votes in favor of that and empowers a committee to act on their behalf. Another question was asked about the rights to the building in case of a split in the Society. The answer was that whoever leaves the Society loses all rights to the building. In case the Society goes down in numbers to below six, the property management would be taken over by the Polish priest from the nearest Polish parish. There were concerns that six members could sell the building and

keep the money so suggestions were made to increase the number of active members to 20 for management of the property. Below this number, the Society would be suspended. The attorney explained that such a rule was unnecessary. It would duplicate the corporation rules, which already prevent the sale of any property by a few members. After some discussion, it was agreed to pay \$1,800 for the sale. The total at the bank account was only \$1,700. Therefore, Wladyslaw Sobocinski landed \$100.00 to the Society (for 6% interest) and a mortgage was taken out at Salem Five Cents Savings Bank for \$1,700 (so the price of the building was \$ 3,500). Some new regulations for the musicians were also adopted at the meeting.

## 1907

At the January 6, 1907 annual meeting at St. John the Baptist Church the board was voted in with Michael Leszczenski elected president and Edward Skonieczki vice-president.

New members:

Marcin Golen

Stanislaw Szczechowicz

Ignacy Szczesny

The newly purchased building was set up as a club house with billiards. The members in charge of the club were to take turn in their duties. Every week two different people were to be in charge. Felicjan Zielenski was allowed to stay at the house as a tenant for \$9.00 a month rent.

The February 3 1907 meeting took place at the club house of the Society, for the first time at their own building. Among matters discussed was the proposal to hire a physician. He would administer to Society's members for reduced fees and would also diagnose the illnesses for which the members collect benefits, and which had been, up to that time questionable.

Dr Field was to be contacted on the behalf of the Society by two selected members.

A dance took place on Feb. 9.

At March 3 1907 meeting two members were expelled for nonpayment of penalty fees.

Dr Field agreed to become Society's doctor and he would charge only \$ .50 per visit. This would be under the condition that all members would use him as their physician. When pressed for the same price for the visits to members' children, the Doctor refused, stating that it would ruin his opinion among his peers. He would charge \$1.00 for the first visit to members' child and less for subsequent visits. Some members wanted to keep their family doctors. It was decided that the choice of doctor would be up to individual members and only those seeking benefits from the Society would be required to use Dr Field. This was agreed to by all and Dr Field became Society's doctor.

April 7 1907 meeting took place at Lafayette Street. An invitation was received from St, Michael's Polish Society in Lawrence to join in the celebration of the Polish Consitution Day (May 3) and it was accepted. The train was to be reserved for the transportation.

New members:

Franciszek Gawrys, 20

Jan Wiernicki, 23

Jan Boltrukewicz, 20

The matter of raising a new building/hall for the Society was discussed for the first time.

A proposal was introduce to collect from all members at least \$10.00 as loans to the Society. Those

who can afford more should lend more. For loans above \$50.00 an interest would be paid at the same rate as bank's savings' rate. Anyone leaving the Society would be paid back the full amount with no deductions, even if he owed for back dues or penalties.

The May 5 1907 meeting took place at Lafayette St. Besides joining the celebrations in Lawrence, the Society decided to hold a local parade after the Sunday Mass on May 30. New Sashes were ordered for all members.

New members:

Wladyslaw Zujewski, 18  
Jan Chmielewski, 19  
Leon Jarzebowski, 32  
Wladyslaw Jedrzejewski, 19  
Zygmunt Sobocienski, 18  
Jozef Lech, 30  
Czeslaw Mieszkiewicz, 17  
Wladyslaw Wlodarski, 22  
Ignacy Klos  
Konstanty Kompienski, 18  
Bogumil Olinski, 23

June 9 1907 meeting took place at the hall at Lafayette Street. The celebration in Lawrence was summarized and a couple of penalties were imposed for those absent and misbehaving.

July 7 1907 meeting took place at the Hall at St. John the Baptist at Washington Street.

New members:

Jan Struzienski, 20  
Franciszek Lipiński, 17

August 4 1907 meeting took place at the club hall at Derby Street.

New members:

Edward Koziolkiewicz, 17  
Walenty Borys, 26

September 9 1907 meeting took place at the club hall at Derby Street. Plans were made for the first theatrical performance at the club. Two members volunteered to make the stage set.

A committee of ten members was selected for the purpose of building a new building and a Hall for the Society of St. Joseph.

New members:

Franciszek Szopczak, 18  
Franciszek Lachacz, 22

At December 1907 meeting some penalties were imposed on the members who misbehaved. The highest one was \$5.00.

New members:

Jozef Bulkowski, 23  
Michal Leszczenski, 38 of Peabody

## **1908**

January 5, 1908 meeting took place at Pulaski Hall. The total for the year paid out as the benefit for

the sick was \$ 200.00. Michal Leszczenski was elected new President of the Society. The caretaker of the building was to continue to collect rent from the tenants and report to the Society's Board of any needed maintenance of the building, as when the chimney was fixed. It was decided that the children attending Society's dances must be accompanied by an adult. The priest of St. John's Church was asked to hire a Polish organist since the American women currently performing is not familiar with Polish songs and she does not do a good job with them nor is she able to lead a Polish choir. The priest made a vague promise in that regard. The Society's members agreed to collect \$0.10 each for the purpose.

New members:

Jan Wronkowski, 39

Franciszek Jablonski, 16

February 2, 1908 meeting took place at the Society's club hall. There was a problem with the roof of the building, which needed fixing. One of the Society's members, Franciszek Trojanowski rented the front room and intended to use it for business purpose.

March 1908 meeting took place at the Society's club hall. An invitation came from St. Michael's Society in Lynn to join in celebration of the Polish Constitution Day of May 3 and at the same time to protest the cruel treatment of Polish landowners and farmers in evicting them from their land in Polish areas currently remaining under German rule. Unfortunately the event was to take place on a weekday and the Society's members were not able to take a day off to attend.

April 6, 1908 meeting took place at Pulawski Hall. The report about the care of the sick was submitted. Wladyslaw Sobocinski was elected cashier, Stanislaw Szczechowicz, assistant cashier, Teofil Pszenny, care of the sick, Wacław Kawczenski and Bronislaw Zaranski honor guards, Stanislaw Tusienski, care of the pool hall. The rent for the apartment for Feliks Zielenski was reduced from \$9.00 to \$8.50. However, he was made responsible for painting and wallpapering as needed and for replacing any broken windows at his own expense. The members present at the meeting voted to require every member to take a vow about keeping all matters of the Society private and not to be discussed outside the meetings. All present took a vow. A decision was made to forbid card playing at the hall on Sundays (under the penalty of \$0.25).

It was also decided that every member should contribute \$0.15 annually to the library and then one can take out books at no charge. A dance was planned for May 30.

New members:

Stanislaw Kwiatkowski, 21

Emil Maliszek, 23

Wincenty Borys, 24

Jan Sawulski, 21

Adam Szostek, 21

Konstanty Nidzgorski, 20

Jozef Waskiewicz, 20

May 3, 1908 a meeting took place at the club hall. The president asked for \$5.00 which he had spent on flowers for the church, but the members refused to pay back, since that expenditure was not approved by the Society's board. A letter from the Irish Society was presented, an invitation to participate in their celebration. It was decided to decline the invitation since St. Joseph Society never received any help from the Irish Society nor were there any common activities in the past. Some children were chosen to recite poems at the May 30 dance:

Weronika Kalapienska, Michalina Zielenska, Wladyslaw Piasecki, Czeslawa Skonieczka, Pelagia Luzienska, Stefania and Helena Laskowski. Later it turned out that the musicians could not make



the date and the dance was cancelled. A hole-puncher for the tickets was purchased.

New members:

Adam Wilenski, 24

Wojciech Dzabik, 28

At June 8 1908 meeting a letter was presented from an orphanage in France, asking for help. All local Catholic charitable organizations were to meet and decide on fundraising. Two delegates to this meeting were selected from St. Joseph's Society. The quarterly confession was to take place on June 27. The sick benefit was awarded to two members. Next, the matter of building of a hall was discussed. It was needed, the Society still did not have a suitable place to meet and hold dances. The president called for everyone to contribute \$ 5.00 to pay off the mortgage on the existing house. Soon the Society would be able to start building their own hall. But not many members were present so this motion was postponed till the quarterly meeting.

New members:

Jozef Klepaczewski, 24

Bernard Grocki, 35

July 6 1908 meeting was held at Lafayette Hall. A problem with the tenant was brought up. Zielenski did not pay the \$ 8.50 rent on time. During the meeting he promised to pay soon. There was a discussion about the possibility of a paramilitary drills which would be conducted by a unit formed from some members of the Society. The members encouraged the formation of such a unit as they existed in other organizations, Polish Falcon for example. The penalty rules for missed meeting were altered: only \$1.00 penalty would apply to those who miss the annual meeting, and \$0.25 for missing any special meeting called occasionally for important considerations. The committee to oversee the hall construction was selected: Michal Leszczenski, Wladyslaw Trojanowski, Marcin Witkos, Wladyslaw Sobocinski, Aleksander Olendrzenski, Franciszek Luziński II, Aleksander Kalapienski. They were to find out the terms of getting a bank loan and permits.

New members:

Zygmunt Kawczenski, 23

Stefan Kawczenski, 21

At August 2, 1908 meeting the sick benefit was paid out to four members at \$10.00 each and one member at \$5.00. The contribution for the French orphanage was collected. The parade was discussed and it was proposed to open it to any organization that would want to participate. The Hall Construction Committee was assigned to inquire about drafting of plans for the new building.

New members:

Feliks Dowgelewicz, 23

Stanislaw Chrapowiecki, 21

On September 5, 1908 a meeting at the club house took place.

New members:

Alfons Silwanowicz, 21

Stanislaw Wieczorek, 18

The Hall Construction Committee reported that after the mortgage is paid, the Hall could be built for \$15.000 The members were asked to give as much money as they could, not as donations

but as loans. Whoever would put in over \$ 100.00 would be able to get 4% interest on their loan. The president asked the members to voice their opinions. They accepted the proposed plan. The secretary wrote down the names and the pledges: W. Sobocienski \$10.00, T. Bartnicki \$10.00, Wl. Sobocienski \$25.00 J. Pydynkowski II \$ 25.00 and so on. The total from the 50 members present was \$ 640.00 which sum they were to collect within a week. The Committee was to continue to work towards their goal.

The benefit for the sick was paid out to three members. The message from the local priest was delivered in which he encouraged the Society to join as a member the Society of The Holy Name of Jesus. This would involve the participation in special masses and a quarterly confession, to which the St. Joseph members have been committed already. Such participation was a request from the Archbishop. It was therefore agreed to. The participation in the celebration of the 100year anniversary of the Boston Diocese with other parishes was also agreed to. On the September 20, 1908, the monthly meeting took place at the hall of P. Robaczewski on Derby Street.

New members accepted were:  
Jan Zuchowski (second time)  
Jan Jendraszek (second time)  
Antoni Ziendarski (second time)  
Konstanty Przenny, 17

The president reported that the previous estimate of the cost of the building was high and that the new figures were either \$12,000.00 for a three story building or \$13,000.00 for a three story building with a concrete basement. Six new members were added to the Hall Construction Committee: Wladyslaw Kawczenski, Stanislaw Szczechowicz, Wladyslaw Szczechowicz, Jan Jaworski, Jan Falkowski and Jozef Laskowski. The plans for the interior of the building were to be drawn soon.

October 5, 1908, a meeting also took place at the hall of Robaczewski on Derby Street.

New members accepted were:  
Konstanty Falkowski (second time)  
Wladyslaw Przenny (second time but for first-time dues of \$1.00 only since he had gone to Poland for some time and was now back)  
Konrad Drozdowski  
Jozef Mikulski

There was a call to the members again to contribute to pay off the mortgage, again these contributions would be treated as loans. Any back dues were to be paid immediately. If anyone owed two quarterly payments or more he would have been expelled unless the payment was made.

A delegation from Ipswich arrived, representing the Polish Society of St. Lawrence. An invitation was extended to the Society of St. Joseph to participate in the consecration of a new Polish church in Ipswich. This invitation was accepted. It was also decided to contact the Society of St. Michael in Lynn, to participate together in Boston, in the celebration of the 100-th Anniversary of the Boston Diocese. A contribution of \$ 0.10 was collected from all members for the cost of transportation and music.

On October 25, 1908, a special meeting was devoted to specific plans and to the marching drills before the celebration in Boston. At the same time 55 new members were accepted: Stanislaw

Magalski, 16, Konstanty Kaczalka, 20, Wladyslaw Rybicki, 30, Telesfor Slomkowski, 22, Aleksander Lagaczewski, 21, Maryan Leszczewski, 19, Franciszek Szmyt, 16, Czeslaw Defanski, 22, Franciszek Kuzniewski, 29, Jozef Rychcik, 21, Jan Przybysiewski, 21, Maryan Hencman, 21, Franciszek Duda, 19, Adam Falkowski, 19, Leon Dudalski, 20, Maciej Lipka, 22, Antoni Pac II-nd 21, Jan Chalupowski, Zygmunt Chalupowski, Florian Chalupowski, Feliks Jakimczyk, 28, Antoni Pydynkowski, 26, Michal Gawenda, 21, Konstanty Hencman, Stanislaw Klosiewicz, 21, Michal Makar, 22, Stanislav Graczyk, 21, Jan Piwonski, 20, Ludwik Pszeny, 28, Heronim Kozlowski, 28, Antoni Welenc, 24, Jan Kamienski, 29, Adam Korpusik, Boleslaw Szymanski, Konstanty Nidzgorski, Ignacy Cecelski, Antoni Jendraszek, Jan Chmielewski, Antoni Swiniarski ( if he is found drunk again, he would be permanently expelled) Antoni Duda, 20, Julian Szymanowski, 28, Piotr Rynkowski, 22, Jan Slabarski, 19, Zygmunt Krusienski, 20, Ludwik Turla, 28, Feliks Kibirs, 35, Jan Matula, 27, Jan Swiniarski, 25, Bronislaw Walenc, Wladyslaw Kowalski, 28, Jan Maciejewski, 19, Andrzej Gruszkowski, 26, Aleksander Markowski, 29.

After the meeting, the marching drill took place and the drills were to be held for three more days with all members required to be present. For the actual celebration, everyone had to get white gloves, black hats and clothes in dark colors. All were expected to gather on Sunday, November 1 at 11 am at the Robaczewski hall.

On November 8, 1908, the monthly meeting took place at Robaczewski hall.

Two new members were accepted:

Wladyslaw Zujewski, 18

Stanislav Smagal, 28

It was decided to organize a parade on November (anniversary of 1830 Polish uprising against the Russians). All were to be present wearing white gloves and no one to be intoxicated, as in the incidents in Ipswich and Boston.

One member protested about the charge of \$ 8.50 for the president's dinner in Boston. However, the treasurer was absent from the meeting so there was no record of the charge available.

Franciszek Luziowski received \$ 10.00 in sick benefit since he injured his hand at work. Up to date only 70 members had made contributions to pay off the mortgage and an appeal was made again to the members to be more generous.

On November 22, 1908, a special meeting at Robaczewski hall took place where two delegates from the St. John Polish Society arrived to apologize and to offer to pay for the tickets and music at the celebration in Lawrence, which took place on June 2, 1908. The sum of \$ 29.30 was refunded to the Society of St. Joseph and friendly terms were restored between the two Societies.

New members:

Jozef Boruszkowski, 26

Pawel Beksa, 23

Teofil Przenny (who came back from another town)

Jakub Krajewski

Jozef Sadowski

Jozef Kozlowski, 16

Antoni Duda

On the subject of the new hall, it was reported that neither the priest at the Polish Church, nor

Pitman Brown, the builder, were willing to risk signing a new loan for the hall construction. It was stated that if the Society had \$3,000 cash, it would be possible to get a loan for a smaller, wooden building with no apartments. The vote was taken to see if the majority agreed to a wooden structure. Most members did vote "yes" on the motion, approving the wooden construction for the building, but it was with a visible disappointment and complaints. So the matter was left for the further consideration of the committee. This committee consisted of the brightest and the most capable members, but not all worked well together. Therefore a change was made and Julian Szymanski was to replace Trojanowski. (Trojanowski had accused Sobocinski of agreeing to a \$500.00 kick-back from Pitman if they were awarded the contract).

The Committee was to meet on November 23, 1908 in the presence of Pitman Brown to see why he backed out of the promise to help with the financing of the construction. The appeal to the members for donations for the project was renewed.

On December 6, 1908 a meeting was held at Robaczewski Hall.

New members:

Franciszek Karczewski

Adam Bachmurski, 33

Telesfor Chludzienski, 28

Wladyslaw Gesek, 23

There was a problem with one of the members, who was previously accepted but did not pay any dues and at the time of the meeting, after a lively discussion, he was denied membership.

There was another heated debate between president Leszczenski and Wladyslaw Sobocinski, who mentioned the \$8.00 cost of president's dinner in Boston. Sobocinski also questioned other costs incurred by the Society, such as the legal costs in dispute with St. John the Baptist Society. The president resigned, after some other accusations. However, there were many voices in defense of the president. It turned out that Trojanowski originally made a joke about the dinner but in fact, the cost of \$7.50 for the Boston trip was for the transportation. His joke was taken too seriously and had been blown out of proportion. The president then agreed to preside over the rest of the meeting.

The Committee made an announcement of the news that the priest had negotiated a 9,000 loan from the bank at a 5% interest and the builder, Pitman Brown agreed to \$3,500 loan at 6%. Therefore, another \$1,000 is required before they could proceed with the construction. It was decided to make a personal appeal to member by making home visits to solicit funds for the building. This brought in \$ 95.00 only. A separate committee was established for the purpose of handling the financial business with the bank.

Michal Leszczenski II of Peabody was expelled from the Society for publicly criticizing the Society outside the meetings. On another matter, it was decided that no children should attend the dances organized by the Society. A letter from Romaszewicz of Boston was read. It expressed appreciation for the Society of St. Joseph for their participation together in the Boston festivities.

On December 21, 1908, a special meeting was called by 5Cent Savings Bank, represented by their lawyer, to discuss the terms of the loan for the hall construction. At the beginning of the meeting, there were 188 members present but that number later increased. The lawyer asked if all members agreed to a \$12,000 loan. All agreed. Next, the members were asked whether they agreed to the \$9,000 mortgage from the bank. All agreed. At last, they were asked if they agreed to a \$3,000 second mortgage from Pitman Brown. All agreed. One member was going to keep the books, pay with checks for work done and make the interest payments. Wladyslaw Sobocienski was chosen for this function. A couple of days later two other members were to come to Beverly to the law office and sign more forms. After the lawyer had left the meeting, the remaining business was discussed.

New members:

Boleslaw Skonieczki, 25

Jozef Szczurek, 32

Wladyslaw Skonieczny was accepted under a condition, that he pays \$2.00 to clear up the confusion about his membership.

The Board was selected for the current year: Franciszek Karczewski, president, Wacław Kawczenski, vice-president, Stanisław Kowalski, secretary, Władysław Swiniarski, financial secretary, Stanisław Szczechowicz, cashier, Bernard Grocki, second cashier, Franciszek Luziński II, Józef Swiniarski, bookkeepers, Jan Jedraszek, Jan Swiniarski, marshals, Stefan Zdanowicz, Heronim Kozłowski, Józef Ejsmond, honor guards, Władysław Pszenny, Franciszek Dowgielewicz, controllers, Franciszek Luziński I, Julian Szymanski, sick benefit administrators, Józef Piasecki, custodian. The Board cochairmen: Franciszek Karczewski, Herman Tyburc, Piotr Robaczewski, librarian: Jan Swiniarski. The sick benefit for Leon Jaworski was reported and an additional collection was conducted for Józef Bulkowski, who lost his hand and whose wife had hospital bills to be paid. \$15.00 was collected and delivered to Mrs. Bulkowski.

## 1909

The annual meeting took place on January 3, 1909 at Robaczewski hall. President Karczewski proposed that the meetings should follow the “parliamentary procedure”, which was then explained to the members. This would limit the time spent on discussions and make the meetings more efficient. The members agreed to start the new method the following month.

Michał Leszczenski was expelled from the society for “treason” and left the room while making some derogatory remarks.

New members:

Julian Obuchowski, 41

Mieczysław Pesciński, 17

The deposits to the bank were \$630.00 and the total in the account was \$830.00. A letter was received from the 555 Polish National Union (ZNP) from Brudziński brothers who extended an invitation to their dance. The proceeds were to benefit the hospitalized members of the organization. At that time Władysław Trojanowski announced his intention of joining ZNP. The president acknowledged that it was all right to belong to both organizations at the same time as long as the duties to St. Joseph Society were being fulfilled and during celebrations, the members would remain with St. Joseph Society. Some members spoke in favor of joining a more religious Polish Union. However, the opinion prevailed, that the Society of St. Joseph was at the time busy with the construction of their hall and with the 10-th anniversary celebrations and would not particularly encourage its members to get involved at other societies. Jan Sawicki was expelled for intoxication after the quarterly confession and Marcin Hencman was also expelled, for playing cards all night after the quarterly confession. Tyburc asked for \$7.00 for the musicians still unpaid since the summer celebration in Boston. The members who owed 10c each for the transportation to the event in Boston were made to pay. The rest of the money, due the Society’s musicians was appropriated from the account. The matter of \$2.00 left over from the \$35.00 paid by the Ipswich parish for the event there was brought up. A quarrel broke out, but in the end the matter was resolved to everyone’s satisfaction and the quarrelling members shook hand before the end of

the meeting. Jan Sobocinski was allowed to keep the \$2.00 as previously agreed, because he came \$10.00 short for the transportation and had paid it from his own money. A sum of money was approved to purchase a vestment for the local priest.

January 14, 1909 there was a special meeting called to discuss the funeral of a deceased member, Jan Przybysiewski who was a victim of an accident at his job on January 13. After a lengthy discussion on whether a member, who had belonged for less than a year, was eligible to receive a death benefit from the Society, it was decided that the Society's constitution should be followed (art.XXIV, par. 1). Therefore, \$1.00 per person collection was taken for the funeral costs. Any money left over would be sent to the mother and younger siblings of the deceased as he was their sole supporter. Also, according to the constitution (art.XXIV, par. 6) everyone was required to attend the funeral, unless they cannot take a day off from work, or have other , very important reasons.

February 8, 1909 a meeting took place at Robaczewski hall.

New members:

Teofil Senkowski, 37

Stanislaw Dobrosielski, 35

Antoni Szygula.21

Wladyslaw Brudzynski

Wladyslaw Twarogowski

Piotr Osowski

It was reported that the costs of moving of the club were \$62.00. The new members were required to be sworn in at the church and all members were to participate in the quarterly confession and communion. All who were more than two weeks late in paying for the death benefit for Przybysiewski would be fined 50c.

The future meetings would be held on Monday nights. It was decided to join the Polish Community of Greater Boston. The delegates would be: Franciszek Karczewski, Marcin Witkos, Michal Leszczenski, Jan Jedraszek, Wladyslaw Sobocinski, Wacław Skonieczny, Wladyslaw Sowinski, Wacław Kawczenski. The last two had to be replaced by Franciszek Dowgielewicz and Walenty Sobocinski because the tailor came in to take their measurements for their uniforms. The Society paid for the transportation cost to Boston.

Franciszek Dowgielewicz was elected a new secretary, after the resignation of the current secretary. Wladyslaw Skonieczny was elected to the post of controller of the books. It was once again forbidden to sell beer to the youth under 18. It was decided that the Society would designate a room for the uniforms, so they would be better and safer kept. The property of the Society was insured, the payment of \$15.00 was made to an insurance company.

The proper order of procession would be kept during future rounds: first, the band, then the Society's Board, then the honor guard and the para-military unit, then the remaining members. March 8, 1909 a meeting at Robaczewski hall took place.

New members:

Jozef Kalapienski,19

Jozef Kwiatkowski,35

Stanislaw Gesek, 17

Antoni Bzozowski was readmitted.

Wladyslaw Dylingowski was admitted after apologizing to the Society and paying \$2.50 fine and initiation fee.

The sick benefit was paid out to Latorski but there was insufficient information on whether he was still ill. The benefit payment to Jan Karbowniczak was delayed until the physician's report. Pawel Grabowski received the sick benefit for one week.

It was decided that the letters would be sent to those, who are behind on the \$1.00 payment of the death benefit for Jan Przybysiewski. Some members did pay late fees of 50c. The quarterly confession was to be held March 18 and all were required to attend as there would be four priests from outside of the parish for the purpose of the confessions. It was decided that after the new hall is finished, there would be a rummage sale held there to benefit the Society. The collectors of items would be sent out to all the districts of the city to collect for the rummage.

Everyone who pledged any money for the construction of the hall should pay immediately. The delegates to Boston reported the plans of a combined pick-nick with the participation of Lowell and Lawrence Polish communities. Herman Tyburc was fined 50.c for not visiting the sick. He disagreed with the fine, but Andrzej Suldzenski paid fine for Tyburc to keep him in the Society.

On April 5, 1909 the monthly meeting took place at Robaczewski hall.

New members:

Wladyslaw Sienski, 19

Wladyslaw Kobuszewski, 24

Pawel Burda, 34

Stanislaw Preczewski, 29

Jozef Plutnicki, 20

Aleksander Mikulski, 21

Jan Przybienski, 15

The new members were sworn in. The president announced that when the new hall would be finished all the members would be sworn in together again.

The sick benefit rules were changed, so that for the first week no sick benefit would be paid out. Those absent from work for two weeks would get one week of benefit, those absent for three would get two weeks of benefit and only those absent for four or more weeks would get the full benefits for all weeks. The payment to Feliks Latorski was postponed pending an investigation of whether he worked during his "sick leave". The total payment from the sick fund for the quarter was \$165.00.

The librarian was instructed to keep a better records of returned books and of fees received. The treasurer and other officials were to keep better records and to adhere to a uniform bookkeeping system, with recites for every payment.

When Jan and Jakub Malski were protesting having to make the death benefit payment, they were reminded of the free music lessons they received from the Society. Stanislaw Wlodarski was expelled from the Society for nonpayment of the death benefit. Cashier, Szczechowicz resigned and in his place Felicjan Zielenski was elected. The pool room would be rented out for \$25.00 a month. Jan Sobocinski agreed to rent it for 5 years so he was going to be charged only \$20.00 a month and \$100.00 deposit.

Jan Swiderski was penalized 25c for speaking out of order. It was decided to pay for the membership

in the Greater Boston Community for half a year only and to withdraw from their organization. The cost of the funeral of Przybysiewski was \$108.00 and the remaining \$68 was sent to his mother in the old country to the address of Ewa Przybysiewska, village of Niechlonin near Mlawa, district Plock. The money was sent by the priest.

May 3, 1909, a meeting took place at Robaczewski Hall.

Two new members were accepted:

Jedrzej Kros, 28

Antoni Napolski, 21

The matter of the windows for the new hall was discussed. The windows with large panels were going to add an extra cost. It was therefore decided to put in the less expensive windows with small panels for the time being. The windows above the stairs were to be of colored glass. The committee was questioned on whether the contract with the builder had been carefully considered before it was signed. There seemed to be many extra costs. Some accusations were made that the committee members took bribes from the contractor. Those accusations however were unfounded and therefore dismissed.

The president was criticized for charging the Society \$1.25 for spending half a day on the Society's business. The president explained how he had missed half a day of earnings due to the Society's obligations and he offered to resign. The membership, however, gave him a vote of confidence. Teofil Bartnicki made a motion to combine the opening of the new hall celebration with the Society's 10-th anniversary celebration. He suggested inviting local societies as well as those from the neighboring towns. There would be a printed program with advertisements purchased by the local merchants. The motion was passed and the committee for organizing this event was selected: Marcin Golen, Franciszek Karczewski, Wladyslaw Trojanowski, Franciszek Szczechowicz, Jozef Sadowski, Adam Bachnurski. The admission would be free for all members of Societies. No excessive drinking would be tolerated.

Marcin Witkos brought up the use of the new building and suggested a clothing store for the first floor. The consideration of this matter was postponed.

May 10, 1909, a special meeting took place to hear the report on the progress of the planning of the festivities. As the delegates who had taken the invitations to friendly societies reported, the Monday date of the American Memorial Day had been rejected in favor of a Sunday date. But it was questionable if the Mayor's office would allow a parade on a Sunday.

Only the meeting of the delegates from out-of-town societies at the train station would be allowed, not the parade. Despite the negative response to the Monday date by the out-of-town organizations, it was finally decided to hold the celebration on Monday, May 31.

A new member was Ignacy Jarosz, 19.

May 19 a special meeting took place at Robaczewski hall. The president made a motion to hold a free for members dance on the night of the celebration. The dance would be still held at Robaczewski Hall and the beer barrels given to the Society could be sold there for \$0.05 a glass. The marching order in the parade was decided: first: the Society from Lowell, second: From Lawrence, third: from Lynn, forth: the societies from Salem, fifth: from Peabody, sixth: from Ipswich, seventh: Society of St. Joseph form Salem. The music bands from other towns did not belong to the union, which posed a problem. St. Joseph Society musicians were unionized



and should not perform at the same event as the non-union musicians. The Society took the responsibility for the noncompliance and ordered the musicians to participate. All of the Societies were informed to arrive by 8:30 am. The secretary was to see to the timely printing of the programs. He would be reimbursed for his time. A delegation was sent to Antoni Kotarski to rent or buy some chairs for the occasion. Kotarski rented the chairs out free of charge.

New member, Franciszek Kaczynski was accepted.

May 23, 1909 another special meeting took place at Robaczewski hall. New members were accepted: Adam Godlewski, 27, Teofil Adamczewski, 20, Maciej Mazurczyk, 21, Grzegorz Kaptejna, 28, Stanislaw Piasecki, 15.

In planning the celebration it was realized that there would be an overflow of people, due to the numerous guests, so the members were encouraged to take their places in the basement or stand outside, so the guests could be accommodated.

After the meeting, there was going to be a rehearsal for the church procession scheduled for June 6. It was decided to rent a sufficient number of horse drawn carriages to meet the guests at the train station. It was also decided that Wladyslaw Trojanowski would represent the Society by riding a horse. The marshals would be at their usual places in the procession. A welcoming committee was established: Franciszek Szczechowicz, Jan Laskowski, Jan Swiniarski, Franciszek Luziński, Stanislaw Dobrosielski, Stanislaw Preczewski, Franciszek Sontkowski, Michal Ochmanowski, Franciszek Zielenski, Konstanty Koczalka, Feliks Kibirsze, Jan Wasiewski, Stanislaw Szczechowicz, Konstanty Rolka, Antoni Kalapienski, Stanislaw Teofil, Wladyslaw Przenny and Franciszek Przenny. Some white aprons and some dishes would be rented. The ticket sale representatives were also selected. Some members would make benches and tables. Three members were excused from the procession.

June 2, 1909, the first monthly meeting took place at the new hall! The rent for the apartments was established. One of the apartments was rented to Jozef Laskowski for \$19.00 a month. The second one had three candidates and Jan Kwiatkowski was finally selected to rent it for \$11.00 a month. Next, the prices for various functions were set: a dance from 7pm-11pm would cost \$12.00, from 3pm-11pm, \$15.00 with every extra hour charge of \$2.00. A theatrical performances would cost \$18 as would the weddings on Saturdays and Sundays. Any day time meeting would cost \$2.00 and in the evening, \$3.00.

The president was absent from this meeting and Wladyslaw Pszenny criticized the president's behavior at the celebration. An empty, instead of full beer barrel had been sent to the dance and apparently the president had locked up some rooms with guests musical instrument and had gone home with the keys before the party was over. Others mentioned that apparently the president, Franciszek Karczewski had held some secret meetings with members of the National Union. While this meeting proceeded, the president was sent for, so he could speak to the charges brought against him. The president arrived and listened to some charges as well as to some paragraphs of the Society's constitution, which were read aloud (Art. V, par. 5-7). He denied any wrongdoing and left the meeting. It was decided to elect a new president. There were three candidates. Marcin Golen was elected. The resignation of the vice-president, Wladyslaw Kawczenski was not accepted.

Six new members were accepted: Ludwik Dzikenicz, 22, Kajetan Jaskiel, 20, Stanislaw

Adamkowski, 26, Jozef Senczkowski, 22 Jozef Krzesinski, 43, Wladyslaw Bernadzki, 25.  
From the celebration of the blessing of the Hall and the dance, there was a profit of \$333.50. It was decided to hold another dance on June 5.

June 9, 1909 there was a meeting at the new hall at 160 Derby Street.

New members accepted were:

Stanislaw Lyskowski, 25

Jan Maciejewski, 25

The quarterly confession would be held on June 19 for all members to participate.

The smaller store located in the new building was rented out to Wladyslaw Sobocienski for 3 years at the rate of \$25.00 a month. Other business opportunities would be discussed at a later date. Franciszek Karczewski, the past president, announced that he received a letter from Boston to attend a meeting of Polish community but did not know if he should attend while no longer a president. He was advised that he should do as he wishes.

The money of \$0.20 a person for the music for the religious procession of June 6 was collected. The matter of improper behavior of some of the members present at the celebration of May 31 was discussed and the fact that some were absent from the part of the celebration taking place in the church. Also, as it turned out, there were too many carriages rented and that was the responsibility of ex-president Karczewski.

The caretaker of the new hall was selected. The job was given to Franciszek Luzienski.

1. He was to keep it clean, do not allow smoking or wearing of hats inside.

2. Keep the stairs clean

3. Upstairs and downstairs clubs were to be kept clean. After each 5-10 crates of drinks were sold, the money was to be turned over to the Board.

4. Basement was to be kept clean and in order, the empty crates to be disposed of.

5. Benches and windows kept clean

6. The Hall is to be rented for the correct price. If someone wants to negotiate, the matter is to be turned over to the Board.

7. Caretaker was to be polite to all guests, but to keep good order. Franciszek Luzienski would take the job of caretaker for \$7.00 a week salary.



## APPENDIX D

### Contents of Salem Maritime NHS Polish Museum Collection

Drawer 07-01

appears to be a framed order of business for meetings

07-02

1938 St. Joseph committee photo

tinted photo of military man – Gen. Pilsudsky (Polish hero/leader between wars)

07-03

2 officers' photos – one in front of church, one in unidentified location

07-4

dance cards, basketball game tickets, score card for baseball, juvenile division dues booklets

1946 officers' photo

1967 Polish Constitution Day proclamation – Endicott Peabody, gov.

07-5

75th anniversary booklets 1974

photos of Kennedy, Kosciusko

photo of military honor roll formerly on Salem Common

07-06

1929 mixed group of men, women, priest, children (picnic?) on lawn (Salem Common?)

unidentified photo – 1910s/20s? – committee of men in hall (St. Joseph?)

young baseball player shaking hand of older player

St. Joseph Society Committee – 1910s? Teofil Bartnicki as Recording Secretary

St. Joseph basketball team – 1930

Executive Committee gavelling meeting to order (n.d.) – in hall? staged photo

St. Joseph Society Committee? in uniforms (n.d.)

baseball team photo 1928

St. Joseph Society on church steps – annual mass? 1940s/50s?

07-07

Polish flag

gavels – one from St. John's Society ("Grupa 1041") with decorative carving on end

25th anniversary pins from St. Joseph Society

photos of 50th anniversary celebration committee

Polish American Bicentennial week program – State House in Boston

1917 prints of Kosciusko

photos of Polish patriot Korfanty with dog – “*Wojciech Korfanty, Posel na Sejm, Wodz i Obronca Ludu Polskiego na Slasku*”

photos of groups of men 1924 – St. Joseph Society Committee and unknown committee – from program book?

07-08

11 red velvet sashes – St. Joseph Soc. No. 604 – “ZPRK” (*Zjednoczenie Polskie Rzymsko-Katolickie w Ameryce*, or Polish Roman Catholic Union of America)

St. John Society No. 1041 – black sashes

6 medals/ribbons – *Kasyer, Czlonek, Secretary Prot.* (for Society officers?)

07-09

Polish flag

Christmas dollars

tags - For Poland for insurance and hospital needs of Polish army in France (WWI)

small school photos – unknown kids, both genders, 1950s/60s?

### Artifacts:

. many framed panoramic photos of national conventions of Polish Roman Catholic Society (Milwaukee, Buffalo, Springfield, Newark, etc.)

. very large framed photo of Polish division in training camp at Niagara during WWI

. “Welcome to St. Joseph Hall” sign

. wooden WWII honor roll/memorial plaque with St. Joseph Society members listed

. bronze plaque commemorating Casimir Pulaski’s landing in Salem (originally on Winter Island? then vandalized, found in water, donated to park for safekeeping/restoration)

### Archival materials:

St. Joseph Society record book

from origins –1934?

handwritten (by Teofil Barnicki?)

St. Joseph Society’s accounting book 1954-76

SAMA 15329: photo album

linked to letter in drawer 7 – 15328

title:

“*Budowa*

*Chemicznego Instytutu Badawczego*

*im. Tadeuska Kosciuski*

*w Warszawie*”

images of new building in Poland, perhaps supported by Salem Poles?

1925

name in calligraphy on front page of album – Aleksandrowi Kotarskiemu (Alexander Kotarski)

another St. Joseph Society account book – 1943-1953

account book from 1901? appears to document insurance policies

information included:

*Certifikatu*

*w. Tow. (policy #?)*

*Imie i Nazwisko (name)*

*Asesment*

*Urodził sie – info in this column*

- *dnia*
- *miesiaca*
- *roku (year of birth?)*

*Wstąpił do Zjed – info in this column*

- *dnia*
- *miesiaca*
- *roku*

*Za ile zabezpieczony (amt of policy?)* – some information is recorded here (mostly \$250, \$500, or \$1,000)

*Suspenowany*

- *dnia*
- *miesiaca*
- *roku*

*Wiek (age?)* – information included here

[no info in the remaining categories]

SAMA 15192: record book

appears to be corporate papers, bylaws, minutes, etc.

bar record book – 1967 (very little data entered)

5 volume History of the Polish People

1957

*Historia Związku Narodowego Polskiego*

Chicago, 1957

*Wydane Nakładem Związku Narodowego Polskiego*

*Odbit w Drukarni Dziennika Związkowego i Zgody*



## APPENDIX E

### Occupancy of St. Joseph Hall site, 1897-1991

#### Data from Salem City Directories, 1897-1991

Date	Street #	Occupant(s)
1897	160	Sem Glovsky, M. Skedzietieski
1897	162	Vacant store
1902	160	Mrs. S. Phalen, Mrs. C. Brennan [incl. 1901-1902]
1902	160	Sem. Glovsky, M. Skedzietieski [incl. 1901-1902]
1902	162	Vacant [incl. 1901-1902]
1904	160	Joseph Sadowski; Antoni Swyniarski [incl. 1903-1904]
1904	160	Joseph Sadowski; Antoni Swyniarski; J. Swyniarski
1904	162	vacant store [incl. 1903-1904]
1904	162	Sons of Poland Hall
1905	160	J. Szczechowicz; Antoni Swyniarski; W. Puchalski
1905	162	Sons of Poland Hall
1906	160	J. Szezechowicz; A. Wieczroek; Y. Obuchowski
1906	162	St. Joseph Polish Band; St. Joseph Beneficial Society
1908	159	Miss J. Walsh, John J. Doyle
1908	160	F. Zielenski, J. Sciezar
1908	162	St. Jos. Polish Band, St. Jos. Beneficial Soc.
1910	158	B. Hurwitz dry goods; St. Joseph's Hall Building (158-162)
1910	160	P. Sushelsky
1910	162	J. Kwjathowski; B. Scekyk; Polish Co-op. Market
1911	158	B. Hurwitz dry goods; St. Joseph's Hall Building (158-162)
1911	160	Polish Co-op. Market
1911	162	J. Kwjathowski; W. Szezechowicz, pool
1912	158	St. Joseph's Hall
1912	158	B. Hurwitz dry goods
1912	159	Miss J. Walsh, John J. Doyle
1912	160	W. Szczechowicz, pool
1912	162	Bldg. [St. Joseph's Hall Bldg?]
1912	162	J. Kwjathowski, A. Koscienski
1912	162	W. Szczechowicz, pool
1913	158	B. Hurwitz dry goods
1913	160	W. Szczechowicz
1913	162	M. Smith; W. Szczechowicz
1914	158	B. Hurwitz dry goods
1914	160	J. Piekarski; W. Szymanski
1914	162	W. Szczechowicz, pool
1915	158	B. Hurwitz dry goods
1915	160	A. Velence; W. Szymanski
1915	162	St. Joseph's Hall; S. Pszeny, pool
1916	158	B. Hurwitz dry goods



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1916	160	W. Szymanski
1916	162	St. Joseph's Hall; W. Uziensky, pool
1917	158	St. Joseph's bldg
1917	158	B. Hurwitz dry goods
1917	159	Joanna Walsh
1917	160	Polish Am Citizens Club, J. Esmont
1917	162	St. Joseph's Hall, W. Uziensky pool
1918	158	B. Hurwitz, dry goods
1918	160	Polish American Citizens Club; J. Esmont
1918	162	St. Joseph's Hall; W. Uziensky, pool
1920	158	B. Hurwitz, dry goods; St. Joseph's Building
1920	160	Polish American Citizens Club; J. Trovoik
1920	162	St. Joseph's Society; St. Joseph's Hall; W. Uziensky, pool
1921	158	St. Joseph's Building
1921	160	M. Czajkowski, dry goods; Polish American Citizens Club
1921	162	St. Joseph's Hall
1922	158	W.H. McGrath, W. Uszyns
1922	159	H. Lesiuk, S. Jaroma
1922	160	Vacant, M. Kobialka groc
1922	160	Derby Clothing Co. Inc., K. Koczalka, Polish Am Citizens Club
1922	162	St. Joseph's Bldg
1922	162	St. Joseph's Society
1922	162	St. Joseph Hall
1924	158	St. Joseph's Building
1924	160	Derby Clothing Co., Inc.; A. Mielszarz; Polish American Citizens Club
1924	162	St. Joseph Hall
1926	158	St. Joseph's Building; A. Milthos
1926	160	Derby Clothing Co., Inc.; A. Mielszarz; Polish American Citizens Club
1926	162	St. Joseph Hall; J. Rybicki, pool
1929	160	St. Joseph Polish Society
1929	160	Hawryluk, Anthony, tlr
1931	158	Derby Clothing Co.
1931	160	Hawryluk, Anthony, tailor; St. Joseph Polish Society; Tanski, Wladyslaw
1932	158	vacant store
1932	160	Nicgorski, Adam; St. Joseph Polish Society; Tanski, Wladyslaw
1934	158	vacant [incl. 1933-34]
1934	160	St. Joseph Polish Society; Szygoski, Julian; Wudarczyk Steph, shoes
1935	160	St. Joseph Polish Society
1935	160	Stupakiewicz, Peter
1936	158	Alper Isadore Men's Wear
1936	160	St. Joseph Polish Society; Zielski, Bronislaus
1937	158	Alper Isadore Men's Wear
1937	160	St. Joseph Polish Society; Staniewicz, Boleslaus
1939	158	Alpers Isadore Men's Wear
1939	159	Malolepszy, Max; Godzyk, Metro
1939	160	St. Joseph Polish Society; Staniewicz, Boleslaus
1940	158	Alpers Isadore men's wear

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1940	159	Malolepszy, Max
1940	159	Godzyk, Metro
1940	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall
1940	160	St. Joseph Polish Society
1940	160	Staniewicz, Boleslaus
1941	158	Alpers Isadore men's wear
1941	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; St. Joseph Polish Society; Staniewicz, Boleslaus
1942	158	Alpers Isadore men's wear
1943	158	Alpers Isadore men's wear
1944	158	Alpers Men's Wear
1945	158	Alpers Isadore Men's Wear
1945	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; Staniewicz, Boleslaus
1951	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; Bera; Stanley; Karniski, Bernard;
1952	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; Bera; Stanley; Karniski, Bernard;
1953	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; Bera; Stanley
1954	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; Bera; Stanley
1955	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; Theriault, Alf; Bera, Stanley
1956	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; St. Josephs Polish Society; Swiniarski, Theo; Bera, Stanley
1957	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; St. Josephs Polish Society; Swiniarski, Theo; Bera, Stanley
1958	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; St. Josephs Polish Society; Swiniarski, Theo; Bera, Stanley
1959	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; St. Josephs Polish Society; Swiniarski, Theo; Bera, Stanley
1960	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; St. Joseph's Polish Society; Swiniarski, Theo; Bera, Stanley
1965	160	St. Joseph's Dance hall; St. Joseph's Polish Society; Makowiecki, Frank; Bera, Stanley
1966	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; St. Josephs Polish Society; Bera, Stanley; Makowiecki, Frank
1967	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; St. Josephs Polish Society; Bera, Stanley; Makowiecki, Frank
1968	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; St. Josephs Polish Society; Bera, Stanley; Makowiecki, Frank
1969	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; St. Josephs Polish Society; Bera, Stanley; Makowiecki, Frank
1970	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; St. Josephs Polish Society; Bera, Stanley; Jaworski, Robert
1975	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; St. Josephs Polish Society; Vacant; Vacant
1976	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; St. Josephs Polish Society; Vacant; Vacant
1977	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; St. Josephs Polish Society; Vacant; Vacant
1978	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; St. Josephs Polish Society; Vacant; Vacant
1979	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; St. Josephs Polish Society; Vacant; Vacant
1980	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; St. Josephs Polish Society; Vacant
1981	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; St. Josephs Polish Society; Vacant; Vacant
1982	160	St. Joseph's Dance Hall; St. Josephs Polish Society; Vacant; Vacant
1983	160	?
1986	160	St. Joseph's Polish Society; Vacant
1988	160	St. Joseph's Polish Society
1991	160	St. Joseph's Polish Society Hall; St. Joseph's Polish Society



## APPENDIX F

### Other Polish fraternal organizations in Salem

We have not dwelt at any length on what is known of most of the other fraternal and mutual assistance associations in Polish Salem, in part because this study originated from Salem Maritime NHS's interest in knowing more about the St. Joseph Society and its Hall specifically, and in part because there are so many gaps in the documented history of these other organizations. According to a c.1911 Salem newspaper article, there were four main fraternal societies in that year: the St. Joseph Society, with about 200 members, the St. John Society (200), the Sons of Poland (100), and the *Sokol Polski* or Polish Falcons (60).<sup>1</sup> Others were added over the years, including those that have been discussed in the chapters of this report. This Appendix is intended to provide a starting point, including some background on the national organizations who had member chapters in Salem, for possible future research on some of the other societies.

#### Polish National Alliance chapters: St. John Society and "Three Nickels"

Salem appears to have had two chapters of the Polish National Alliance: the St. John Society on India Street (Group 1041) and Group 555, variously referred to by participants in this study as the Sons of Poland lodge or the "Three Nickels," at Derby and Turner Streets. Both organizations are now gone, and questions remain about their origins and exact affiliations over time. The fragmentary memories and knowledge about these two groups that we were able to gather in our research and interviewing for this project reflects the extent to which the old clubs had become largely purely social and insurance organizations, rather than entities with clear political purposes and allegiances by the time the third generation of Salem's Poles came of age.

The Polish National Alliance, founded in 1880, was formed in large part to counter the PRCUA's insistence that one had to be Catholic in order to be Polish. The PNA was the largest of the Polish national organizations for many years, and like the PRCUA, it was politically and culturally active as well as operating in the realms of insurance and journalism.<sup>2</sup> PNA leadership tended to be drawn from the "intelligentsia" in Polish

<sup>1</sup>"Remarkable Progress of Poles in Salem," Salem Evening News, n.d. [1911?]. Found in House of Seven Gables scrapbook, "News Clippings 1910-1916."

<sup>2</sup>Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 37-38; Pienkos, *PNA*, 16.

communities—educated elites who tended to be more politically liberal than their counterparts in the PRCUA.<sup>3</sup> By and large, PNA leaders and members were staunchly Catholic, but they were not as deferential to the authority of the priests as PRCUA members tended to be. As a result the PNA was sometimes painted as being anti-church or anti-clericalist.<sup>4</sup> The organization sought to position itself at times as the unofficial “government” of the Poles in America and to become an umbrella for many of the other Polish American organizations, but over time, it settled for a more indirect role as a central player in the various coalitions that formed to address Polish and Polish American issues.<sup>5</sup>

The St. John Society was located at 5 India Street, in a building that was razed when that part of the waterfront was used to build a coal-fired power plant in the 1950s. This organization was *Grupa 1041* of the Polish National Alliance. It first appears in the city street directory the early 1920s, when it is listed—apparently by someone more familiar with French than with Polish—as St. John de Baptiste Polish Society. There is some evidence of tension between the St. John and St. Joseph Societies in the early years, perhaps reflecting the intensity of the rivalry between the two main Polish fraternals at that point. The PNA began the observance of Polish Constitution Day in May in 1891 at its home base in Chicago, and the custom spread to other areas of the country by 1904.<sup>6</sup> In 1906, the St. John Society invited the St. Joseph Society to take part in its Constitution Day celebration, but apparently this was an extremely last-minute invitation, which the St. Joseph membership declined, perhaps reflecting either a certain degree of disorganization by the hosts or a less than close relationship between the two societies. Some other kind of discord arose in 1908, seemingly over a dispute over who would pay for transportation and music at a June celebration in Lawrence. This disagreement had gotten as far as the courts, as the December 1908 minutes of the St. Joseph Society refer to legal costs incurred; however, in November 1908 two delegates from the St. John Society visited the St. Joseph Society meeting to offer apologies and payment of \$29.30, upon which “friendly terms were restored between the two Societies.”

Little other data was found for this report about the St. John Society. There are several artifacts from the Society in the Salem Maritime NHS collection, suggesting that

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<sup>3</sup> Pienkos, *PNA*, 19-21.

<sup>4</sup> Pienkos, *PNA*, 24.

<sup>5</sup> Pienkos, *PNA*, 19-20.

<sup>6</sup> Pienkos, *PNA*, 18.

these had been given into the keeping of the St. Joseph Society sometime after the St. John Society disbanded and before St. Joseph Hall was sold to the park. These include black sashes with the No. 1041 designation, a wooden gavel, and commemorative pins (Figure 80). *Grupa* 1041 is still listed on the PNA/ZNP website as having member insurance policies in force, but these are now directly billed to the Chicago headquarters.



Figure 80 Commemorative pins from the St. John Society, *Grupa* 1041 of the Polish National Alliance (Związek Narodowy Polski, or ZNP). (Salem Maritime NHS)

The origins and affiliations of Salem's second PNA chapter are somewhat more obscure. This was *Grupa* 555 of the PNA. The number implies that it was founded very shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, within the same decade as the Salem Polish Catholic parish and the St. Joseph Society.<sup>7</sup> Locally, it became known as the "Three Nickels," for the three fives in its group number. However, interviewees who spoke about the Polish clubs in Salem also frequently referred to this club as the "Sons of Poland." The Association of Sons of Poland was another, smaller fraternal organization, founded in 1903 in New Jersey. The 1911 Salem newspaper article cited above suggests that there originally was a Sons of Poland chapter in the city, and in fact the street directory for 1904 and 1905 shows a "Sons of Poland Hall" on the property that was bought in 1906 by the St. Joseph Society as its permanent home. However, it is not clear how the Sons of Poland chapter, if it persisted, came to be identified with Group 555 and the Three Nickels site. Given the presence of multiple PNA chapters within even quite small cities like Salem, it seems possible that smaller groups may have merged with larger, better-established ones over time, especially as memberships began to dwindle after the Second World War. It may be, then, that the older *Grupa* 555 of the PNA absorbed a smaller Sons of Poland chapter at some point, which may account for the Sons of Poland name being remembered by our interviewees.

<sup>7</sup>In 1900, there were 451 PNA lodges, numbered in the order that they were formed; by 1910 there were 1,106. Pienkos, *PNA*, 329.

Hedwiga Kohn noted in her 1978 interview for the House of Seven Gables that she was still a member of Group 555 of the PNA in that year. She also said that her father, Jan Romaszkievicz, founded Group 555 with her husband, and said, “my husband had to help to build that brick building up”—presumably a reference to the alterations made when the PNA took over the older structure. The listing of attending groups at the 1928 opening of the new home of the Polish American Citizens Club does not clear up the mystery: it mentions the St. Joseph’s Society, the Sons of Poland, Br. 505 (Wladyslaw Rybicki, president), and the St. John’s Society, Br. 1041 PNA (Edward Urbanowicz, president).<sup>8</sup>

The brick building at the corner of Derby and Turner Streets that served as the home of Group 555 was built in 1806 by Joseph Waters, and later used as the Bertram Home for Aged Men. Tolles notes in his architectural history of Salem that this building was “greatly modified” after it was bought by the PNA or Sons of Poland chapter to serve as their headquarters (see Figure 75).<sup>9</sup> Several older neighborhood residents spoke about how it was altered to serve this function, primarily by removing the third floor and raising the second-floor ceiling to create a large hall for banquets, events, dances, and other gatherings. The building was bought around 1966 by the House of the Seven Gables, which still uses it as a day care center under its new name of Emmerton Hall.

Table 1 Comparison of PRCUA and PNA membership, 1924 and 1935<sup>10</sup>

	Year founded	1924		1935	
		Members	Groups	Members	Groups
Polish Roman Catholic Union	1873	83,326	930	161,769	1,147
Polish National Alliance	1880	139,137	1,648	272,750	1,869

<sup>8</sup> “New Home of Polish-American Citizens Club is Dedicated,” Salem *Evening News*, April 20, 1928.

<sup>9</sup> Tolles, *Architecture in Salem*, 47.

<sup>10</sup> Information in this table is drawn from Lopata, *Polish Americans*, Appendix A.

## Polish Falcons

The Polish Falcons (*Sokols*) of America were a much smaller group than either the PRCUA or the PNA, but still a significant national Polish organization. This group originated in Poland in 1867 to promote physical education and training for Polish youth, according to the philosophy of “a sound mind in a sound body” (*Wzdrowym ciele zdrowy duch*). In its first decades, it had a very strongly nationalist focus, as the wording of its 1914 mission statement shows: “The object of the Polish Falcons Alliance of America is to regenerate the Polish race in body and spirit and create of the immigrant a National asset, for the purpose of exerting every possible influence towards attaining political independence of the fatherland.”<sup>11</sup> The organization offered insurance policies after 1928. Its primary focus has always been on sport and physical activities, and it continues to sponsor national tournaments in bowling, golf, and track and field.<sup>12</sup>

The first Falcons’ “nest” in New England was established in Bridgeport, Connecticut in 1904, followed by others in Connecticut. In Massachusetts, Lowell’s nest was founded in 1905, Holyoke’s in 1905, and those in Worcester and Salem in 1910.<sup>13</sup> Salem’s nest, No. 188, was thus founded slightly later than the affiliates of the two larger Polish fraternals in the city. The Falcons seem to have been as mobile as their name implies, turning up in rented facilities around the neighborhood for many years. Street directories show them at 167 1/2 Derby Street (the large brick building known as “Kotarski Hall”) from at least 1918 until the period when that building was demolished during the creation of Salem Maritime NHS. Confusingly, the “Independent Order of Falcons” is also listed at 128 Derby Street, the old firehouse at the foot of Bentley Street, between 1920 and 1926, suggesting that either there were two groups or that they rented two spaces simultaneously. After the demolition of Kotarski Hall, they appear to have moved to 150 Derby Street, just east of St. Joseph Hall, for a short time. Then, in 1940, they bought a former factory building at 15 Cousins Street, a block north of Derby Street at the Webb Street end of the neighborhood—seemingly their first permanent home (see Figure 74). Because this was the largest of the Polish halls in the Derby Street

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<sup>11</sup> Donald Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young: A History of the Polish Falcons in America, 1887-1987* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1987), 3.

<sup>12</sup> Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young*, 5, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young*, 231-33.



neighborhood, it was the site of choice for many social, political, and other gatherings, making it an important community hub. Linda Moustakis recalls, “When I became a teenager or 11, 12, the Falcons Hall right down the street would have these huge Polish weddings, and then we would wait until the wedding, the eating was over, and...we would dance.” An incident frequently referred to with pride by Salem’s older Poles is the visit of John F. Kennedy to the Falcons Hall. (It is not entirely clear what year this took place.)

The factory on Cousins Street remained the Falcons’ hall until 2003, when the membership decided to sell the property. However, the group still functions. According to current member Edna Kobierski, it meets at St. John the Baptist Church, although most of its policy-holders are scattered throughout the U.S. Salem’s chapter sponsored bands, basketball and track teams, and other groups, many of whom went to national tournaments and sometimes brought home prizes. The group even sponsored a senior bowling league until quite recently. Buddy Walker remembered that in comparison with the other organizations, “the Falcons was more...into athletics and stuff like that. They had very good basketball and they even used to do physical training with the younger ones and stuff, in the hall, with the big hall, they used it as a big gym, and they put in a beautiful kitchen in there that they used to service their own functions and stuff like that.” One other important function served by the Falcons Hall was that it provided a place for members to shower. Like some of the other clubs, the Falcons offered shower facilities at a time when most residences in the neighborhood did not have hot running water.

### **KON Club/Polish Socialist Alliance/Kosciusko Club**

At the foot of Kosciusko Street, next to the spot where one of Salem’s first Poles, Joseph Brown, had lived in the late nineteenth century (Figure 8), was a building occupied by a group known as the KON Club. The lack of community knowledge of the history of this club illustrates the extent to which Polish homeland politics had ceased to be of urgent concern to most of those in Polish Salem by the middle of the twentieth century. The 1870 building on this property was occupied first by Irish families, and had become a two-family home with a number of boarders, all Polish, by 1910. In 1916, it was purchased by the Polish National Defense Society.<sup>14</sup> This organization, the *Komitet Obrony Narowowej* (known as KON), or Committee for National Defense, was a national umbrella group initiated in 1912 by the leaders of the Polish Falcons of America.

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<sup>14</sup> Friedlander, “Historical Research,” 146, 150.

KON was envisioned as a paramilitary fraternal organization that would devote itself to training potential soldiers for the struggle for Polish independence in what many could see looming as a European war involving all of the imperial powers occupying Poland.<sup>15</sup> KON initially emerged as a broad coalition of most of the major Polish fraternal organizations, including the PRCUA, but was quite quickly taken over by pro-socialist supporters of Josef Pilsudski, which caused it to fracture along left/right lines. Clericalists and PRCUA delegates formed another broad nationalist group, the Polish National Council, which supported the conservative faction within the various exile groups that were hoping to form the new government in a liberated Poland.

Pilsudski and the leftists emerged victorious in Poland itself after the First World War, which put leftist organizations like KON increasingly at odds with the more conservative prevailing political mood in Polish America.<sup>16</sup> The Salem club changed its name to the Polish Socialist Alliance in 1921, and then to the Independent Polish Socialist Society. In 1931 the building was bought by the Polish Socialist Alliance of the USA, a change which suggests that the local chapter was being supported by a national group. The old building was torn down and replaced by a small three-room clubhouse that year.<sup>17</sup> Recollections about this club among second- and third-generation community members were sketchy. According to Eddie Luzinski, who was born in 1929, “[People] always said [the KON Club] really didn’t belong somehow with the same thinking of the other Polish people.” Luzinski’s impression was that they were Communists whose group “disintegrated after the [Second World] war.”<sup>18</sup>

The club owned the building on Kosciuszko Street until 1970, when it was sold to a man from Beverly. It was taken by the city for back taxes in 1974 and subsequently demolished.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me*, 49.

<sup>16</sup> Radzilowski, *The Eagle and the Cross*, 151.

<sup>17</sup> Friedlander, “Historical Research,” 150.

<sup>18</sup> Walter Andruskiewicz told Salem Maritime NHS historian John Frayler that the full name of the KON Club was “Koniowczy,” a name that does not seem to connect to the known history of the Polish socialist movement and that may also indicate how isolated the socialists had become by the middle of the twentieth century.

<sup>19</sup> Friedlander, “Historical Research,” 150.

### **St. Anthony Society**

The St. Anthony Society met in a building at the corner of Derby and White Streets which is now the VFW Hall.

### **Crow II Club**

The Crow II Club was not a Polish organization *per se*, but it apparently had a large Polish membership. Local historian Edward Carberg notes that it was begun at 21 Derby Street, at the far eastern end of the Polish neighborhood, around 1895 and remained there until 1952, when it moved to the “Black Wharf” off Memorial Drive (probably after the demolition of its clubhouse for the power plant). It stayed in that location until 1982, when it moved elsewhere.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Carberg, “Rediscovering Salem Polonia.” A photo of a group of Crow II Club members at a clambake is included in John Frayler’s files at Salem Maritime NHS.

## APPENDIX G

### Derby Street listings, 1912 and 1939

These listings from the Salem city directories for 1912 and 1939 contain names of businesses and individuals along Derby Street for the two years surveyed in Chapter Four.

#### 1912

street #	listing
1 Derby St.	Enterprise Social Club
1a	C. McCarthy
3	Vacant s.r.
7	Club room
7 1/2	Club room
9	Club room
21	Crow Club
26	Club room
34	M.A. Carroll
34	Wm. A. Carroll variety
36	Mrs. C. Lemasney, T.A. Lemasney
40	M. Hencman, Mrs. M.A. Corbett
42	Mrs. M.E. Sears, F. Walsh
44	J.A. Birmingham
45	A.E. Whelpley
48	Mrs. Mary Kennedy
50	Patrick Hayes, Jos.F. Crowdis, Mrs. I. Larson
51	Colbert Bros. Inc., coal
54	Simon Cotter, Mrs. H.P. Ladd, P. Marcazini, J. Ambrose
58	Mrs. M.E. Sargent, J.H. Davis
60	John J. Barry, J.J. Colbert
62	Vacant
63	J. Pedinkowski, K. Przyny
65	Patrick Mackey, R. Talkook
66	Mrs. S. Maloof, grocer, W. Kobierski, J. Goncyca
67	Wm. C. Kroen
68	J. Rossu, C.A. Munsey, T.W. Cashman, J. Konieczniski
69	F.J. Lorenz
70	Vacant
71	J. Michaels, J. Clukey, H. Michaels, J. Bishop
75	H. Michaels and Son, grocer
77	M. Gouska, J. Bishop
78	F.C. Rybicki

80	Polish Naturalization Club
81	J.J. Whitehead, I. Najecholski
82	Rybicki Bros., grocers
83	S. Kuc, dry goods
84	W.F. Cashman, pool
84 1/2	W.F. Cashman, variety
85	S. Szczechowicz, F. Wisniecwski, J. Oszana, C. Cygan
86	J.J. Cashman
86 1/2	Storage
87	Vacant store
90	L. Buba, grocer
91	Stevens Drug Co., I. Klein, W. Tower
92	Mrs. E. Skonicki, L. Buba, H. Samuelson
94	Rev. A.H. Dolgoff, M. Selinski, H. Pitroff
95	M.K. Rogers, J.H. Driscoll
96	Selinski and Kramer, bakers
97	N. Sokol
98	P. Gajewski, variety
99	N. Sokol, N. Sokol, grocer, J. Kopacz, M. Cory
100	A. Pszetakiewicz
101	W. Dobor, J. Jarzynka
102	Thos. H. Hayes, W. Dziebrick
104	Mrs. J. Shea
105	A. J. Vincent, C.W. Trayers
106	Sons of Poland Soc. Branch 555
107	P. Klebosz
109	Vacant
110	W.F. O'Neil, shoe repairer, J.J. McCarthy
111	J.J. Cahill, M. Sullivan, I. Blatt, groc.
112	Mrs. L.M. Moreland, variety
113	James Cahill, F.M. Regan, D.J. O'Neill
114	Bertram Home for Aged Men
117	M. Dominik, A.H. Cok, W. Koczur
118	W.E. Pearson
119	Vacant
121	Vacant
122	W.A. Morday & Co., grocers
124	Club room
125	Mrs. M. Hurley, Mrs. M.T. McGrath, M.E. Carr, Martin Curran
126	M. Witkos, variety, J. Chmilewsky, A. Skunceck, M. Witkos, variety
127	W. Filip, A. Popielski
128	Vet. Fireman Assn. Engine House
131	Vacant

132	Mary J. Riley, Mrs. B. Lynch
133	N. Cohen, variety
134	Wm. M. Joyce, plumber
135	L. Goldstein, N. Sainin, N. Cohen
136	Mrs. M. O'Neil, C. Marciniak
137	M. Winer, Jos. Silets, Morris Collier
138	M.J. Hoar, Mary Brickley
139	Storage
140	W. Prusak, S. Swiniarski
141	M. Winer, shoe repairer, T. Potorski, pool
142	M.J. Duggan, hairdresser
143	A. Woldyka, grocer
144	W. Casey
145	Collier's Bldg, Derby Furniture Co.
145a	A. Yudin, Louise E. Murray, Louis Linsky
145b	A. Collier, real estate, Wm. J. O'Brien
146	Mrs. F. Gelin, variety, Sam Gelin
147	L. Miller, groc.
149	S. Mollie Landers, groc.
150	Heagney & Co., apothecaries
151	M. Aronson, I. Mehlman, H. Einbinder, M. Zalikoff, J. Polansky, I. Davidoff
152	Chas. H. Rehal
153	J. Jarosz, lunch
155	F. Wejtewicz, A.W. Wyzenski, J. Szczechowicz, Derby Furniture Co.
156	J. Krzescenski, S. Klosinski
157	Mrs. E. Burns variety
158	St. Joseph's Hall
158	B. Hurwitz dry goods
159	Miss J. Walsh, John J. Doyle
160	W. Szczechowicz, pool
162	Bldg. St. Joseph's Hall Bldg?
162	J. Kwjathowski, A. Koscienski
162	W. Szczechowicz, pool
163	F. Zielenski
164	J. Kohn, groc.
165	J. Benierkowski, C. Defanski, J. Laskowski, J. Theriault
166	F. Szczechowicz, shoes
167	White Eagle Provision Co.
167 1/2	Mrs. C. Kotarski, pool, John Gurski, F. Dubiel, S. Wilczinski
168	F. Pawluk, Cath. Noonan, J. Szczepucha
169	Salem Bakery Co., Coloniel Interstate Exp. Co.
169 1/2	S. Petrowicz, J. Gurski, M. Leczenski, J. Mendalka, M. Stefanski
170	A. Potorski, pool

171	L. Pett, shoe repairer, Peoples Shoe Store, W. Mendalka, W. Gorski
172	I. Alpers, clothing, Mrs. M. Potas
173	I. Bialkowski, E. Lipshitz, dry goods, Mrs. S. Kotarski, J. Kaminski, variety
174	A. Gorman, groc., H. Tyburc
178	Custom House
179	S. Whipple and Son, coal etc.
180	Home for Aged Women
183	S. Whipple & Son, wharf
184	J. Smidt & co., bicycle repairers
186	Vacant store
187	G.W. Lane & Son, flour, coal, etc.
188	James Mulcahy, Mrs. F. Harkins, D.J. Callahan, J. Cotter
191	Private stable
197	G.W. Pickering coal
201	W. Uszinaski, hairdresser, Mrs. B. Morrison, rear
202	A. Patterson, whol. stationery
203	Misses Ahearn, Mrs. M. Manning, Margaret Taylor
204	Vacant store
206	J.P. Birmingham, M. Hubis
207	R. Kulakowski, hairdresser, J. Pasternak, r., M.J. Ahern, r.
208	A. Selink, L. Rubinstein, umbrella repair
209	Polish Drug Co., New Union Hall, rear
210	A.B. Wilson
211	M.V. Smerczynski, milliner
212	Union Pharmacy
213	Nutile-Shapiro Co, Ticket Agency
213	New Union Hall, rear
214	H. Schildkraut, grocer
215	E. Levesque, hairdresser
216	Mrs. N. Szczechowicz, B. Suwinski, Misses Hayes, S. Skoniceki
217	C.F. Dailey, junk
218	A. Katz, W. Jasiak
220	J. Majewski, shoe repairer
221	Parsons and Dalton, fish
222	Italians ???
224	M. Kaplan, glazier, S. Ejsmont, rear
226	C. O'Bara, tailor, J. Frodyna
227	J. Cahill, roofer & furniture
230	I. Bevolsky, L. Levenson, C. O'Bara, N. S. Fuller, M. Czajowski, F. Kibiersza
231	L. Osolinski
231 1/2	Vacant
233	J.P. Buckley, mason, rear, A. Feliks, furn. mover, r.
235	Salem Iron Foundry

241	Salem Iron Foundry
249	Pitman & Brown Co., carpenters & painters
254	Mrs. M.M. Neary, Misses Daley, Miss A. Hallisy, M.J. Kelly, C.F. Lessor
259	Pitman & Brown Co., doors, sash, etc.

# 1939

street #	listing
6 Derby St.	Gormally, Francis; Niciewsky, Arthur
8	Hart, Alice
10	Violette, Frank
21	Crow Club
34	Carroll, William
36	McCarthy, John; Lemasney, Catherine
40	Hincman, Marion; Dombrowski, Edward
42	Horne, Albert
44	Scott, Mary; Rodriques, Irene
48	Fournier, Francis; Gajewski, Frank
50	Zmijewski, Kazimar; Plutnicki, Joseph
54	Hincman, Chester; Martin, Ralph; Bilewicz, Frank; Urbanowicz; Klus, John
58	Gorczyca, Frank; Rozumek, Walter
60	Decowski, Stanley; Rozumek, Stanley
62	Luzinski, Henry; Szybiak, Andrew; Lewis, Richard; Petroski, Adam; Swiniarski, Anthony
63	Dwyer, Charles; Thomas, Edward
65	Eastman, Alex; Mackey, John
66	Palmer, Stanisława Mrs., grocer
67	Munsey, Charles
68	Buckholtz, Esther; vacant
69	Lorenz, Mary
71	Larocque, J. Alfred; Brisbois, Lena; Golik, Rayman
72	Budka, John; Brudzynski, Romuald
74	Zbyszynski, Henry, grocer
75	Golik, Rayman, grocer
77	vacant
78	Falkowski, Josephine; Graczyk, Stanislaus
81	Maskiewicz, Adam; Najechalski, Ignatz
82	Rybicki, Inc. provisions; Rybicki Catherine E., Mrs.; Kowalski, Max; Swiniarski, Joseph
84	Kulak, Joseph, grocer; Swiniarski, Joseph, barber
85	Kaminski, Mary; Maskiewicz, Kaszmir; Hincman, Ignatz; Warcholik, Anna; Hincman, Aloysius

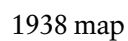
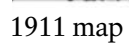
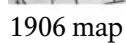
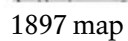
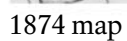


86	Kulak, Joseph; Kulak, Felix
87	Szetela, Kasimierz, restr
88	Kulak, Joseph, restr
90	Blanche's Beauty Shoppe
91	Derby Wall Paper Co.; Malowicki, Kostanty; Hayes, Margaret; Orzechowski, Teofil
92	Paskowski, Paul; Wojtonik, Adam
94	Backry, Victoria; Bowden, Benjamin; Garro, Anthony
95	St. Anthony's Club
97	Jordan, Samuel; Rojalski, Joseph; Wilgo, Martin
98	Boston Bakery
99	Jordan, Samuel, groc
100	Hedio, Michael, restr
101	Brudzynski, William, shoe repair; Wozniak, Frank
102	Collins, Margaret; Holloran, Joseph
104	Bachorowski, Frank
105	Szczepucha, Ignatz; Szczepucha, Bronislaw
106	St. Joseph's Ukrainian Socity
109	Kielbasa, Frank, tailor; Lachendro, Frank
110	LaPlante, Wilfred
111	Gables Drug Co.
112	Kusmar, Helen, grocer
113	Simard, Blanche; Winiarz, Joseph; Cizek, Kathleen; Polchlopek, Joseph, barber
114	Sons of Poland Hall
115	Sadoski, Charles; Sobotka, Tony; Stankiewicz, John; Witch City Express
117	Dominick, Michael; Misygar, Mary; Lubas, John
118	Sowinski, Wladyslaw
119	Jordan, Walter; Wroblewski, Frank; First National Stores, Inc., grocers
121	Hawthorne Patent Medicine Co.; Kozakiewicz, Kasimir, optician; Lojko, Anthony
122	Nowak, Frank, grocer
124	Debski, John, barber
125	Gesek, Frank; Kinast, Josephine; Kopleman, Kate
126	Witkos, John; Witkos, Antonia, Mrs., groc
127	Kulaszewski, Tekla; Jason, John
128	Polish Chopin Choral Society
131	Andruszkiewicz, Anthony
132	vacant store
132 1/2	Klosowski, John
134	vacant store
134 1/2	Stanley Shoe Hospital
135	Irzyk, Julian; O'Neil, John; Jarzynka, John, rest
136	Dube, V. Yvonne; Wieczorek, Steph

136 1/2	Kohn, Alex, grocer
137	Szufnarowska, Frank; Sikut, Frank; Wlodyka, Ludwiga
138	Kohn, Alex; Kohn, Francis, physician
140	Maga, Steph, restr; Pasternak, Mary
142	Lubas, Joseph, barber
143	Nawrocki, Karol, grocer
143 1/2	vacant store
144	Michalowski, Frank; Dombroski, Jennie
145	Pasternak, Henry; Mazeikus, Stella; Dufault, Anna; Sieczkowski, Mary
146	Hawryluk, Anthony, tailor
147	Service Laundry, Inc.; Groman, Etta, grocer; Gryskiewicz, Anna; Collier, Ida; Waleszkiewicz, Joseph
148	Mysliwy, Peter, grocer
149	Mroz, Emil, grocer
150	Falcon Club
151	Miedzienowski, M. John; Pszenny, Edward; Mroz, Emil; Kapnisis, George; Beaulieu, Arthur; The Bung Hole, liquors
152	Johnson, James
155	Derby Furniture Co.; Potorski, Rose; Karbowniczak, John; Sieczkowski, Anthony
156	New Derby Lunch; Dobrosielski, Adam
158	Alpers Isadore Men's Wear
159	Malolepszy, Max; Godzyk, Metro
160	St. Joseph Polish Society; Staniewicz, Boleslaus
164	vacant store
166	vacant
168	Capt. Richard Derby House; Meek, Alice
172	vacant store
177	Derby Wharf
178	US Custom House; US National Park Service
180	Home for Aged Women
187	vacant shop
188	Jerzyk, John; Maszokiewich, Ustanka Mrs.; Mysliwy, Peter; Jakowski, Mary; Simard, Charles
197	New England Steel Rack Co.
199	Pickering, George Coal Co.
204	Pocharski Bros., funeral director
206	Jeswicki, Wanda, Mrs., hairdreser
208	Rybicki, Wladyslaw; Shaluk, Panko
210	Shaluk, Panko, grocer
211	Therault, Malvina; Tardiff, Leon; LeBrun, Albert; Walsh, Joseph; Tornello, Salvatore; Dube, Joseph; Robaczewski, Mary; Tardiff, Ulric
212	Soboczinski, Felix, restr
213	Up to Date Millinery
214	Trow, James, plumber

215	Unon Street Garage
216	Filipiak, Ignatz; Jusko, Joseph
220	Lisaj, Kazimierz, restr
222	Standard Wholesale Co. Beer
224	Defanski, Nellie; Iwuc, Joseph; Andruszkiewicz, Joseph; Zukowski, William
226	Polish Industrial Bankers; Salem Relief Committee; Pinkham Lydia E. Memorial; Pinkham Lydia, Babies Clinic
271	Atlantic Refining Co., gas station
274	vacant store; Oldson, George, gas station
275	Jenney Manufacturing Company
278	Harper Garage Co.
281	Beaver Automobile co.
283	Essex Tire & Supply Co.
285	Colonial Garage, Inc; Townsend Motor Car Company
288	Salem Elev Works; Dinsmore Mfg. Co; Tillinghast Supply & Machine Company; Duke Machine Co.
289	Nelson, Elmer, gas station; Dodge Radio Service
289?	corner: Mother's Lunch
290	Hallin, C.F.
311	Langmaid, J.P & Sons

## Properties at Herbert and Union Street, 1874-1938





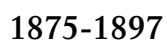
## APPENDIX I

## Properties in Vicinity of St. Joseph Hall, 1852-1937

These maps, from Amy Friedlander, “Salem Maritime National Historic Site, Historical Research 1626-1990” (New Jersey: Cultural Resource Group, 1991), document the changing built environment in the neighborhood immediately around St. Joseph Hall from before the arrival of Poles in the city to just before the establishment of the park.



1852-1874



332



## 1898-1911

In this period of heavy Polish immigration to the city, many buildings were added. #27, in front of the Hawkes House, was the location of Alpers' Men's Wear for many years. #2 is the "Rum Shop," relocated from its original position at the corner of Derby Street and Palfrey Court. St. Joseph Hall has taken its place in this map (#12). On the south side of the street, the large building numbered #38a and #38b on the map is "Kotarski Hall" (see Figures 27 and 36).



In this map of the immediate area around the hall just before the creation of the national park, Joseph Kohn's store and home appears as #25a and #25b at the corner of Derby Street and Palfrey Court.

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